MASTER PLAY 1 HANDBOOK

Jeremy Flint & Freddie North

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INTRODUCTION

The Master Play 1 Cartridge consists of 100 hands which have been played with great skill by experts and each will provide a major test of technique, card reading, camouflage or downright low cunning to any bridge player. Most hands have just one successful line of play but sometimes you may make your contract by an inferior method in which case you will be invited to try again. You will be conducted through the bidding sequence that occurred at the table before each hand as this may give you clues to use in the play or defence. The bids represent the styles of many different players and you will, no doubt, dislike some of the bids you are asked to make.

When you are defending, your partner has agreed to lead his fourth highest card or top of a sequence and to play a signalling and discarding system in which a high card encourages in that suit.

Sometimes, you will be asked to make an opening lead you dislike only to find your choice would have worked better. The leads are all reasonable in that they were made by experts and frequently, as a defender, one has to recover from an 'unfortunate' opening lead by making an expert play later on.

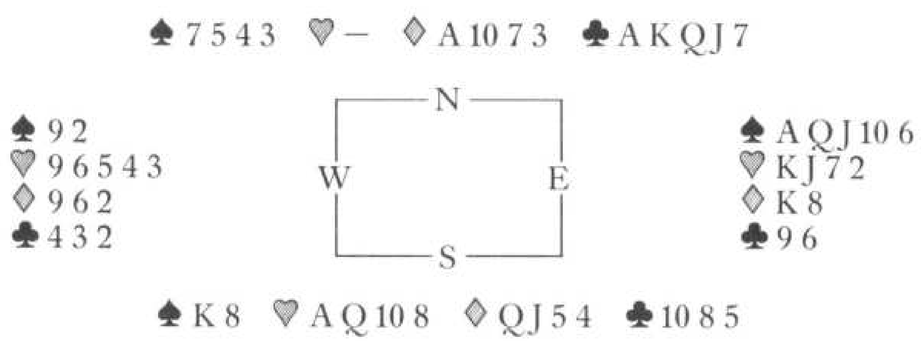
When you are declarer you are pitting your wits against defenders playing a similar system but remember – they are experts and will only signal possession of a high card if they think it will help partner. They are not in the business of helping you to make your contract.

In the Master Play 1 Cartridge you have been given the chance to explore all reasonable possibilities in the quest to make your contract or defeat declarer, however, in order to fit in as many hands as possible, where there is a card which obviously has to be played but can be played at any time, we ask you to play it at the first reasonable opportunity. Similarly if there is a necessary play that is not obvious, you are sometimes not allowed to do it until the last sensible opportunity. If you are, therefore, keen to cash a winner but are not allowed to, please be patient and try again later. The purpose of Master Play 1 Cartridge is to improve your understanding of bridge rather than reproduce exactly the conditions at the table when you can mess around with the cards in any order.

With the exception of a small number of defence hands where there is not room on the screen, if you press the 'Dbl' button at any time after the end of the bidding you will see the two hidden hands. They can be removed by pressing the 'Play' button. If you find it difficult to understand why the successful play works it can be helpful to see the problems the defenders are facing at any moment as they are, for example, squeezed out of vital cards.

1. SOMETHING IN RESERVE

N–S game; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♢	Dbl	Rdbl	P
2♣	2♠	3NT	P
P	Dbl	P	P
P			

Contract: 3NT doubled by South
Lead: ♠9

East wins the opening lead with ♠A and continues with the ♠Q to South's king. It is obvious that East must hold all the outstanding honour cards so there is no point in taking the diamond finesse. South should play three rounds of clubs ending in dummy, and exit with a spade. East can cash her winners but then must concede an extra trick in one of the red suits.

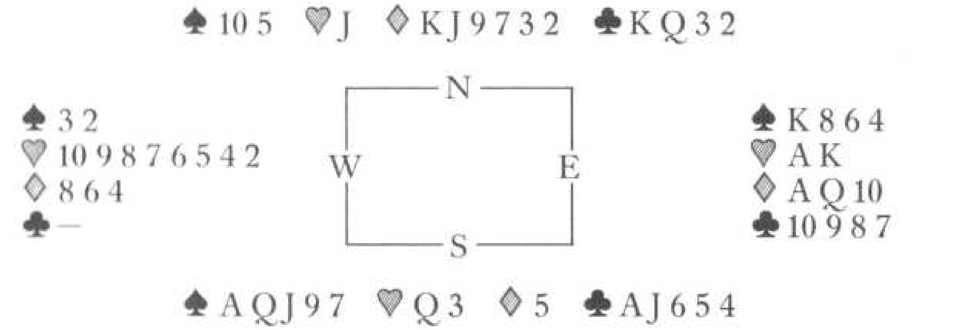
This hand occurred many years ago in the Mixed Pairs championships at the EBU Autumn Congress, held in Eastbourne. The winners of the event, and the defenders on this hand, were Boris Schapiro (W) and Rixi Markus (E). They took full advantage of a less than perfect performance by the declarer who immediately cashed *all* his club winners and then exited with a spade. Rixi took her winners and in the process squeezed the declarer. He had either to blank the ♡A or ♢Q. He chose the latter, but then the ♢K locked him in dummy and Boris took the setting trick with the ♢9. 'Just as well I had a bit in reserve,' quipped Boris.

Notes

Declarer can cash three or four club tricks before exiting with a spade but if he cashes his last club he squeezes himself. Alternatively he can cash the ♡A before running all five clubs. If East has retained two diamonds declarer will exit with a spade – otherwise declarer will cash dummy's ♢A, felling the K. Declarer must, of course, read East's discards accurately but this should not be difficult.

2. VIVE la DIFFERENCE

N–S game; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♣	3♡	4♣	4♡
4♠	P	5♣	Dbl
P	P	P	

Contract: 5♣ doubled by South
Lead: ♡10

East switches to the ♣10 at trick two. The trump switch should be won in dummy so that declarer can play on spades. The ♠10 should be overtaken with ♠Q at trick 3. The ♡Q is ruffed and a second spade finesse is followed by the ♠A and a spade ruff in dummy. Dummy's top club is cashed and East is given the lead with a diamond. South ruffs the diamond continuation, draws trumps and claims.

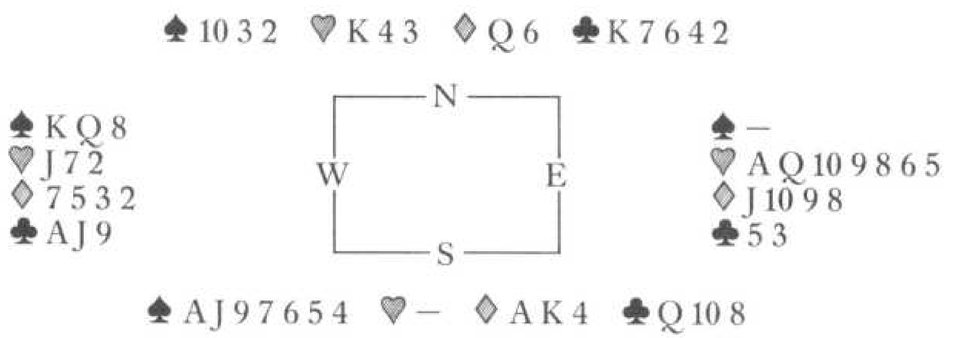
Martin Hoffman was the star of this hand. Taking part in a multiple team event he played the spade suit just that little bit differently to his rivals in the same contract. All the declarers played the ♠10 at trick three, but only Hoffmann overtook with the queen. A small but subtle difference. The other declarers found that they could not readjust their timing and had to admit defeat. As the French would say, Vive la différence!

Notes

The most significant variation is where ♠10 is run at trick 3. It holds and a second spade finesse wins. The ♠A reveals the 4–2 break, and a spade is ruffed in dummy. Dummy exits with a diamond, won by East, who plays a second round of trumps. Declarer has to win in dummy to avoid establishing a high trump for East. But now the problem of getting to hand, ruffing a heart in dummy and returning to hand to draw trumps and enjoy the thirteenth spade proves insurmountable.

3. HOUDINI'S TRICK

N–S game; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	P	4♡	4♠
Dbl	P	P	P

Contract: 4♠ doubled by South
Lead: ♡2

South should ruff the heart lead, enter dummy with the ♢Q and ruff a second heart. The ♢AK follow, on which dummy's last heart is thrown, eliminating the red suits. Now a small spade towards the ♠10 leaves West with the choice of conceding a ruff and discard, opening up the club suit or sacrificing his second trump trick.

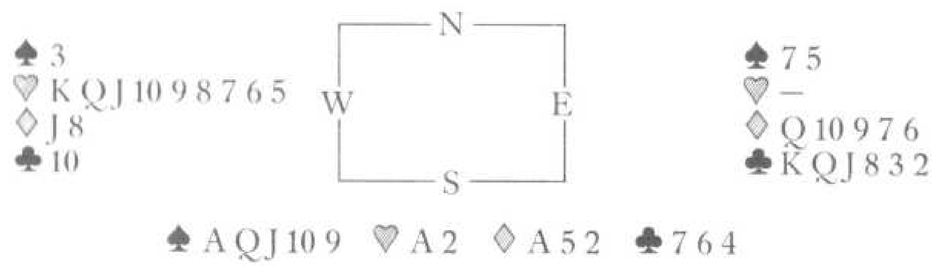
Claude Rodrigue, one of England's best dummy players, starred in this hand from rubber bridge. Sensing that two trump tricks would have to be lost, Claude's main concern was to avoid losing more than one club. Thus he played for this unusual form of elimination.

Notes

If declarer eliminates the red suits and plays the ♣Q, he succeeds as the cards lie but this is inferior to the recommended line because he may fail if East has ♣J.

4. EUREKA!

N–S game; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
P	1♠	4♡	4♠
P	P	P	

Contract: 4♠ by South
Lead: ♡K

East ruffs the opening heart lead, which is a body blow, but declarer can recover, if he follows with the ♡A. With no possibility of timing the hand for a squeeze, declarer must rely on obtaining the rare coup of a double ruff and discard.* For this scheme to work West must hold precisely one club and two diamonds. Declarer wins the club return and draws the adverse trumps. After cashing the ♢AK he exits with a heart. West, who has only hearts left, is forced to allow declarer to discard a diamond from dummy and a club from his own hand. The next heart is ruffed in dummy while declarer's last club is discarded.

This hand was reputably played at rubber bridge, but the origin is obscure and further enlightenment might well be regarded as apocryphal. Nevertheless, the ploy of losing one trick – one obvious winning trick – in order to gain two is a well-known gambit, and faced with what appears to be four inescapable losers declarer has to conceive a plan which is capable of success.

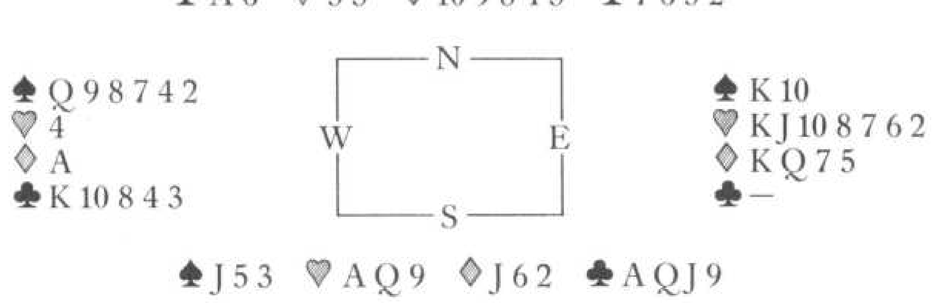
*To be more exact, this is a double discard followed by a ruff and discard.

Notes

The only variation of note is when declarer plays the ♡2 to the first trick. East will continue with the ♣K. Now if the club is ducked, the hand really blows up. When trick 2 is taken by the ♣A declarer has a glimmer of hope. The adverse trumps are drawn, the ♡A cashed and a diamond played to dummy's king. The idea is to lead a small diamond back towards the closed hand and duck to West's ♢J. However, West can ditch this plan by playing the J on the first round, or, failing that, East can go up with the ♢Q (Crocodile coup) on the second round.

5. ALMOST THERE

N–S game; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1NT	2♠	P	4♡
P	P	P	

Contract: 4♡ by East
Lead: ♢2

Declarer ruffs a club at trick 2 and then ruffs a diamond in dummy. He returns to hand with a second club ruff and leads the ♡J. South wins with the ♡Q and plays the ♢J, won by declarer's ♢K. The ♡10 is played next. South wins with the ♡A and switches to the ♠3. North wins ♠A and returns a diamond to promote South's ♡9.

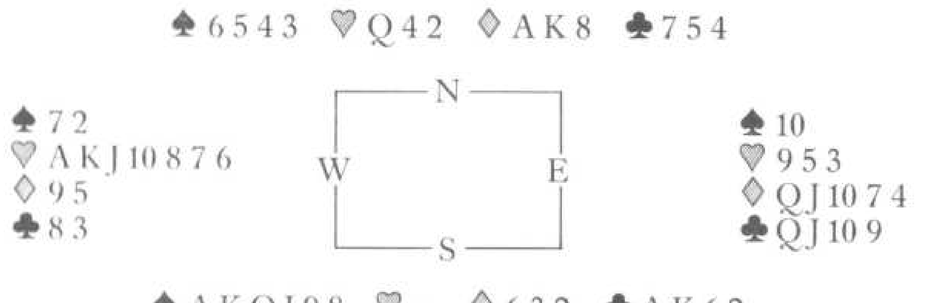
This hand occurred in the final of the 1967-68 Gold Cup (Reese *v* Gray). The contract was the same in both rooms and there was no swing on the board. In one room ♣A was led, giving East an easy ride. In the other room the ♢2 was led. After ruffing a diamond in dummy and returning to hand with a second club ruff, declarer led the ♡J to South's ♡Q. Instead of continuing with a third diamond South switched to a spade.

Notes

South had to defend well after the obvious diamond lead. A spade lead (unlikely after West's bidding) makes it easier to beat the contract. North wins with the ♠A and declarer does best to play the ♠K. East now returns a trumpto South's queen and South plays a diamond to dummy's ace. Now as long as South is careful not to cover the ♠10 with the ♠J declarer is left with a losing diamond. If South initially leads ♡A and then a diamond he should also beat the contract easily. Good defence at bridge often means recovering after an unlucky opening lead.

6. SHADES OF HOLMES

E–W game; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3♡	P	P	4♠
P	5♢	P	6♠
P	P	P	

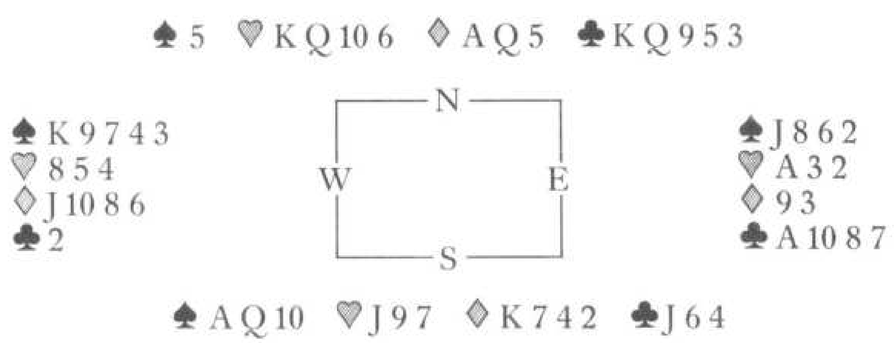
Contract: 6♠ by South
Lead: ♡K

South ruffs the heart lead, cashes the ♠AK and notes that East throws a small heart on the second round. The ♢A is followed by a low heart, ruffed in hand. The ♣AK and ♢K place the lead in dummy. Now the ♡Q is led and a diamond discarded from hand. West, who only has hearts left, is forced to concede a ruff and discard, enabling declarer to make the remainder of the tricks on a cross-ruff.

The setting for this hand was a round of the Crockfords Cup, the team's championship of England, and the hero was the brilliant British player, Maurice Harrison-Gray. His opposite number in the other room, who was also in six spades, resigned himself to a 3–3 club break. Minus 50 was his just reward. Both declarers ruffed the heart lead and played two rounds of trumps, but it was only Harrison-Gray who, in typical Sherlock Holmes style, reasoned like this: West was likely to have seven hearts so it seemed that East must hold six diamonds, and if that were the case he would very likely have discarded one on the second spade. Conclusion: the clubs were not going to break. Obviously this was not an open and shut case, nevertheless, the evidence was strong and Harrison-Gray rose to the occasion accordingly.

7. THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG

E–W game; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♣	P	1♢	P
1♡	P	2NT	P
3♢	P	3NT	P
P	P		

Contract: 3NT by South
Lead: ♠4

Declarer takes East's ♠J with his ♠Q and leads a diamond to dummy's ace. Now the ♣3 is played from dummy and East must duck, otherwise declarer has 9 tricks. Having won the third trick with the ♣J, declarer turns his attention to hearts. When the ace is knocked out he can count, 2 spades, 3 hearts, 3 diamonds and 1 club.

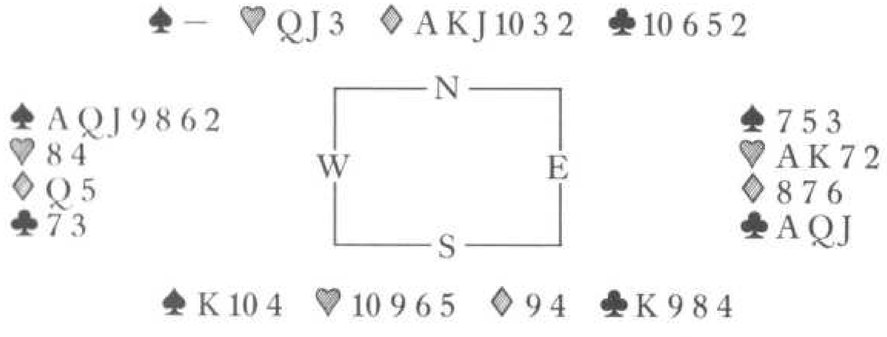
Jim Sharples was the star in this hand which occurred in the Gold Cup, Britain's premier team event. The contract was three no trumps in both rooms and the play to the first trick was identical, but then came a parting of the ways. In the other room the South player led a club to dummy's king and East's ace. East returned a spade and now there was no way of making nine tricks before the defence took five. Jim Sharples realized that if there was a danger it could only come from East, attacking his spades prematurely. He therefore led a diamond to dummy and came off the table with a low club. East could win this trick if he wished but if he did so his ace would catch thin air! Alternatively, if West had the ace of clubs he was welcome to the trick since he could not attack spades to advantage. In fact East ducked the first round of clubs and now Jim turned his attention to hearts, thus ensuring his contract.

Notes

Declarer might decide to play on hearts before clubs. This would be O.K. if West held the ♡A, or the diamonds divided 3–3. In practice this line must fail.

8. THE DECOY

Game all; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1♣	P	4♠	P
P	P		

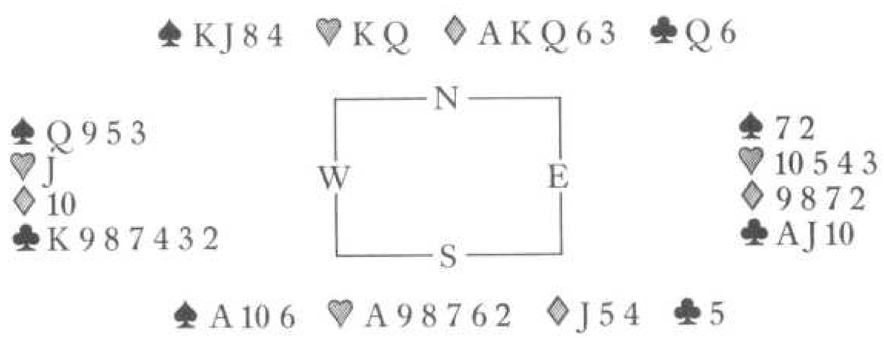
Contract: 4♠ by West
Lead: ♢A

North wins the first two tricks with the ♢A and the ♢K, West playing the ♢Q on the second round. At trick three North continues with ♢J and South ruffs with ♠10. West overruffs, and now with only two trumps outstanding lays down the ♠A. So declarer has a trump loser in addition to the two diamonds already lost. When he takes the club finesse that is also wrong. One down.

South on this hand was Bobby Slavenburg, former World Pairs champion, but on this occasion playing for hard cash rather than match points. Slavenburg earned his reward when the declarer laid down the ♠A and subsequently had to admit defeat.

9. FAINT HEART

N–S game; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	2NT	P	3♡
P	4♡	P	4♠
P	5♢	P	6♡
P	P	P	

Contract: 6♡ by South
Lead: ♣9

East wins the first trick with the ♣A and returns the ♣J which South ruffs. Dummy's top hearts are cashed, West following with the knave and then discarding a club. A diamond is played to the knave and a second diamond to the ♢A, West showing out. The ♢K is cashed and the ♢6 ruffed in hand. Now the ♠A and a spade to the knave – the finesse has to be right – leave declarer comfortably placed. Dummy plays the ♢Q and East can either surrender immediately or prolong the agony for one more round. If East discards his ♣10, South discards his ♠10. East's hearts are captured on the last two tricks.

South, a former world champion, was guilty of an extraordinary *faux pas* when this hand was dealt at rubber bridge. Normally a most skilful dummy player, his actions – or perhaps lack of them – were totally out of character. This is what happened. He ruffed the knave of clubs at trick two and then, with an impetuous gesture, tabled his cards, inquiring if anyone had four hearts. East admitted that this was indeed the case and promptly wrote down + 100! It was particularly ironical for South that the cards were distributed in such a way that the slam could not be defeated. West's singleton trump was an *honour* and he also held the ♠Q. And, of course, nothing could prevent declarer reducing his trumps to the same number as East's – the textbook counter to a bad break.

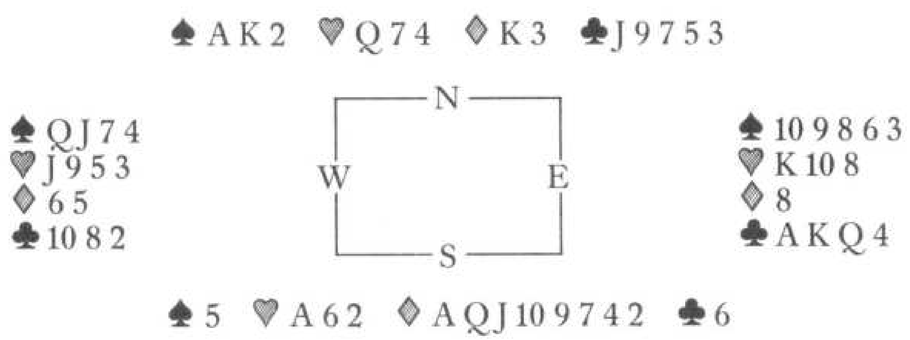
9. Faint Heart *continued*

Notes

1. If South fails to ruff a diamond in his own hand he will be unable to shorten his trumps sufficiently. East's ♡10 will then make a trick.
2. If, having ruffed the fourth round of diamonds, South fails to finesse the ♠J, he will go down. East will now ruff the ♢Q and South will be left with a losing spade.

10. I DID IT MY WAY

N–S game; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1♠	2♢	2♠	3NT
P	6♢	P	P
P			

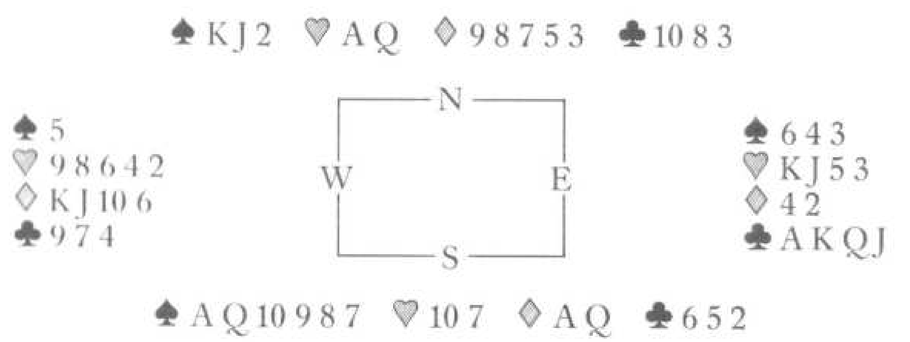
Contract: 6♢ by South
Lead: ♠Q

Declarer wins the spade in dummy, cashes a second top spade, discarding the ♡2, and runs all the diamonds reducing everyone to three cards. With West having shown the ♠QJ it is a fair inference that East has the ♡K and the ♣AKQ to justify his opening bid. So East is thrown in with a club and forced to concede the last two heart tricks.

The heroine of this hand was Mrs Gertie Gottesmann, a former Belgian international, playing rubber bridge in London. Her first bid of only two diamonds looks rather quaint, but she decided to play the auction by ear. There was certainly no holding back with her next bid and it only remained to justify that optimism in the play. With eleven tricks on top, the twelfth had to come from the heart suit, but the king was clearly marked with East. However, it also seemed that East must hold the top clubs to justify his opening – and that was the key. After two rounds of spades and eight of diamonds everyone was down to three cards, thus throwing East in to lead away from his ♡Kx becomes just a formality. However, the plan had to be conceived at trick two when Gertie discarded a heart – not a club.

11. WOMEN IN EXCESS

Game all; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1♣	1♠	P	2♠
P	P	2NT	3♠
P	P	P	

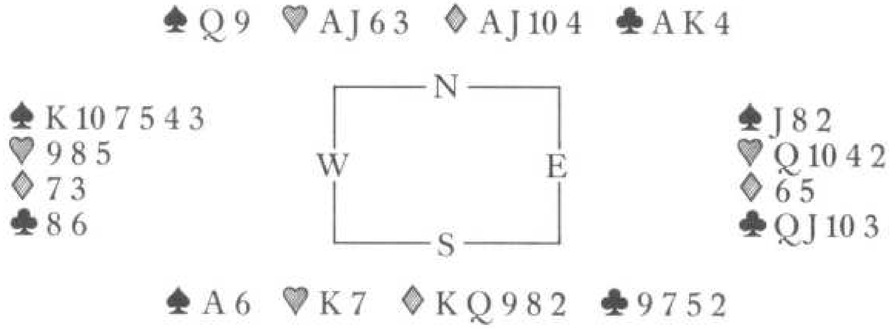
Contract: 3♠ by South
Lead: ♣9

East cashes the ♣J, ♣Q and ♣K, obviously still holding the ♣A, and switches to the ♢4. South should play the ♢A – rejecting the finesse – cash the ♠A and exit with ♢Q. West will win and switch to a heart. Again the finesse must be rejected, so the ♡A wins and a third round of diamonds is ruffed. The ♠J wins the next trick, a fourth diamond is ruffed and now the ♠K provides the entry to enjoy the fifth diamond for a heart discard. Declarer loses just 3 clubs and 1 diamond.

In spite of his meagre assets, West was right to enter the auction as four hearts by E–W cannot be defeated. The lucky lie of the cards for E–W is the cross that South has to bear as declarer in three spades. When this hand was played at the table South could not resist the temptation of the diamond finesse. He still had the chance of the 3–3 break but when this failed too he complained bitterly about his bad luck. It is amusing to observe that he would almost certainly have made his contract had he held a small diamond instead of the queen. As his partner remarked drily, 'Unfortunately he suffered from too many women.'

12. ODDS & ENDS

Love all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♢	P	2♡	P
3♢	P	4♢	P
4♠	P	5♣	P
5♢	P	6♢	P
P	P		

Contract: 6♢ by South
Lead: ♣8

The club lead is won in dummy, East following with the queen. Trumps are drawn in two rounds followed by the ♡K, ♡A and the heart ruff (the ♡Q might have come down). A club to dummy is followed by a fourth heart which is ruffed in hand. The ace and another spade throw the lead to West who must now concede a ruff and discard (dummy discards a club, South ruffs).

This was a brilliantly played hand by John Collings, in partnership with Jonathan Cansino, on the way to winning the 1966 Master's Pairs Championship. From the opening lead and play to the first trick Collings inferred that East had length in clubs. When he also found East with length in hearts it was obvious that West had the length in spades. Thus the odds were that West held the ♠K. That is why Collings chose the winning end-play of partial elimination (there was still a losing club at large) followed by the ace and another spade.

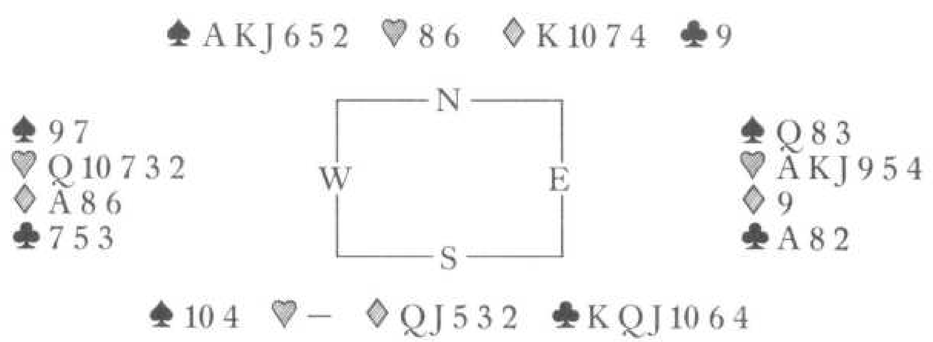
Notes

1. A black suit squeeze against East fails. If declarer thinks that East has the ♠K he would follow the first eight tricks as above but then will overtake the ♢9 with the ♢J and cash the ♢10. If East is to keep two clubs he must bare his ♠K. If East keeps the ♠K guarded he must discard a club and declarer discards the ♠6 from hand and sets up a club winner for himself while he still has the ♠A.

2. A major suit squeeze against West fails. Declarer draws trumps and plays ♣K and another club. He wins the spade return with the ♠A, trumps his last club and cashes the rest of his trumps. If West had the ♠K and length in hearts he would be squeezed.

13. GIRLS CAN ALSO PLAY

Love all; dealer N.



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♠	2♡	3♣	3♡
P	4♡	5♣	P
P	Dbl	P	P
P			

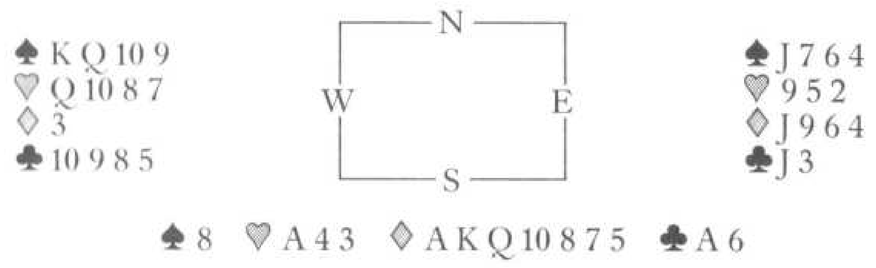
Contract: 5♣ doubled by South
Lead: ♡3

It is clear that if the clubs break badly South will almost certainly be defeated – the heart force being too much for him. The problem then is how to succeed if the trumps are 3–3. A diamond ruff is the danger. In an attempt to avert this South should lead ♢J at trick two. If he is allowed to hold the trick he must switch to the ♣K. East wins the ♣A and continues hearts. South ruffs, draws trumps and K.O.s the ♢A.

This hand was played in the Mixed Pairs Championship at the 1970 Stockholm World Olympics. Of course five diamonds would have been a much happier contract but the bidding developed in such a way that it was not easy for South to show her second suit. The star on this hand was Mrs Fritzi Gordon, whose name is renowned in international bridge, and although she was by no means alone in playing in five clubs doubled she was the only declarer to succeed. She visualized the danger of the diamond ruff and did her best to lessen the risk by playing the ♢J at trick two. West ducked, as players will, and that was the last chance the defence had to obtain a plus score.

14. TURKISH DELIGHT

Game all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2♢	P	3♣	P
4♢	P	4♠	P
4NT	P	5♢	P
5NT	P	6♡	P
7♢	P	P	P

Contract: 7♢ by South
Lead: ♠K

Declarer should win the ♠A and immediately ruff a spade. If the diamonds are 3–2 there is no problem, but if East happens to hold ♢Jxxx South needs to reduce his trumps. The ♢AK follow and then, when West shows out, the ♣A, a club to dummy's ♣K and a second spade ruff. Now comes the ♡A and a heart to dummy's ♡J, a third spade ruff and heart to dummy's ♡K. The ♣Q is played from dummy and East can resign.

This hand occurred in a duplicate match in Istanbul in 1965 and the hero in the South seat was Halit Bigat, one of Turkey's leading players (he now resides in Switzerland and has represented his adopted country at international level). He was quick to see the most likely danger and paved the way for a plausible counter by ruffing a spade at trick two. The heart finesse still had to stand up but in the end Halit's technique won the day and the grand slam was safely in the bag.

Notes

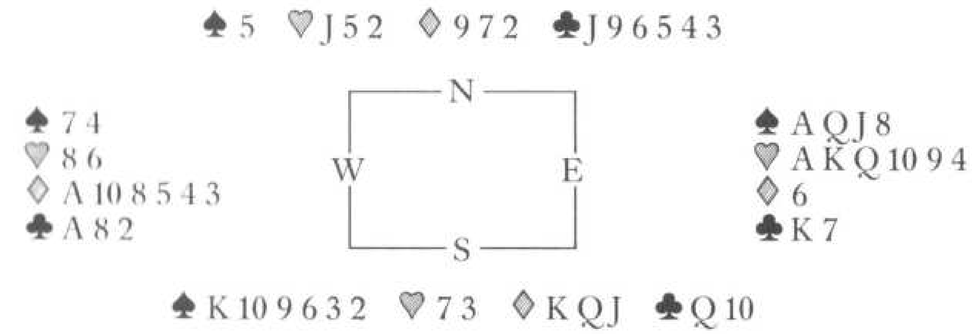
1. If declarer fails to ruff a spade at trick two he cannot recover.
2. If declarer ruffs a spade at trick two but fails to take the heart finesse on the second round of the suit, he is an entry short to coup East.
3. If declarer discards a spade on the ♢K he fails.

14. Turkish Delight *continued*

4. After the club to dummy's ♣K declarer can lead the ♣Q. East does best to discard the ♡2. Declarer must then discard the ♡A!! Another club will be fatal, as East can discard a second heart so declarer must ruff a spade, finesse the ♡J, ruff the last spade (again not the ♣7) and a heart to dummy's ♡K leaves East helpless. This method is very similar to the main line.

15. A GOLD WATCH FOR A DOLLAR

Love all; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
2♡	2♠	3♢	P
4♡	P	5♣	P
6♡	P	P	P

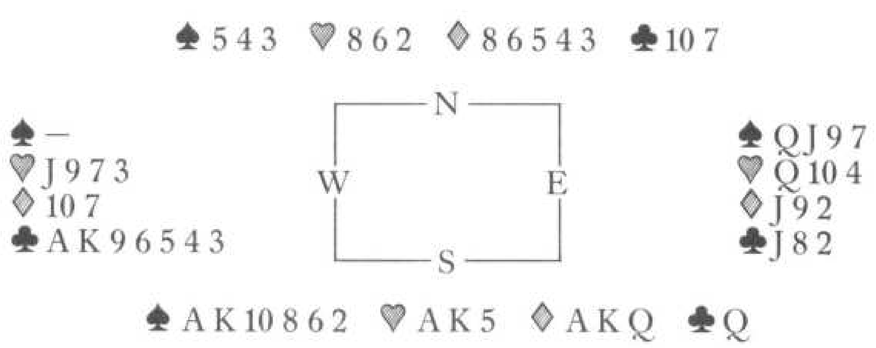
Contract: 6♡ by East
Lead: ♢K

Declarer wins the ♢A and then ruffs a diamond with ♡9. At trick three he leads the ♡10, South following with the ♡3 and North the ♡2 (this is a good play by North. If he accepts the bargain the ♡8 is an entry to dummy to establish the diamonds). The ♡AK draw the outstanding trumps and now the ♠J is played. This necessitates two good plays by South. First, he must win the spade with the ♠K, and then he must return the ♠10 to break the communications for the impending diamond-spade squeeze. Suppose, for example, South plays the ♣Q at trick seven, instead of the ♠10. The ♣K wins and the last two trumps are cashed. The ♣7 is led to dummy's ♣A and South is squeezed. If South makes the mistake of ducking the ♠J declarer will adopt a different tack, every bit as successful. Two rounds of clubs followed by a diamond end-play South so that he must lead into declarer's ♠AQ.

This hand occurred in a tough game of rubber bridge in London. South was a visiting American Life Master and although he played a skilful and crafty game the defence kept just one jump ahead. It is probably true to say that both sides enjoyed these exchanges which demonstrated bridge at its very best.

16. TAKE CARE OF THE PENCE

Game all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2♣	Dbl	P	P
2♠	P	3♠	P
4♠	P	P	P

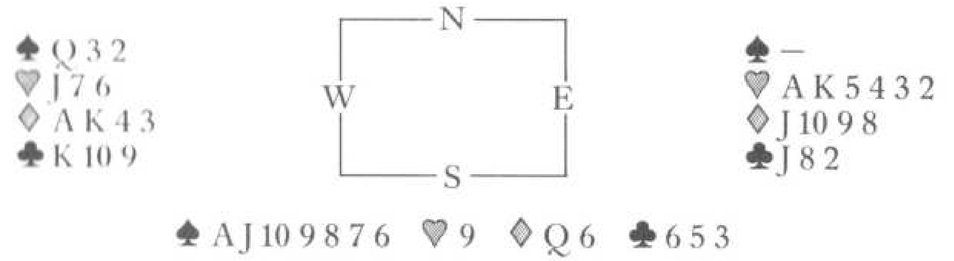
Contract: 4♠ by South
Lead: ♣A

It is essential for declarer to ruff the second club with the ♠6, retaining the ♠2. The ♠A reveals the trump position now three rounds of diamonds are followed by three rounds of hearts. In at trick nine with the ♡Q, East plays the ♠Q but declarer counters by following with his ♠8. If East now plays a club, South must ruff with his carefully preserved ♠2 and take the trick in dummy with the ♠5. East's second trump trick is lost to declarer's tenace.

Success on this hand while playing at a Scottish Congress is credited to Irving Rose, the British international, who did indeed ruff the second trick with the ♠6. His foresight proved invaluable when it was discovered that East held all the missing trumps. Hasty analysis at the table pinned the blame on East for failing to unblock the ♡Q. But, as Rose pointed out, if West wins trick nine with ♡J, the end-play will not disappear. Say West exits with the thirteenth heart, dummy ruffs and when East overruffs with an honour, South underruffs with ♠8 – still preserving that vital ♠2.

17. THE CARDS ARE MARKED

E–W game; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1NT	P	4♡	4♠
Dbl	P	P	P

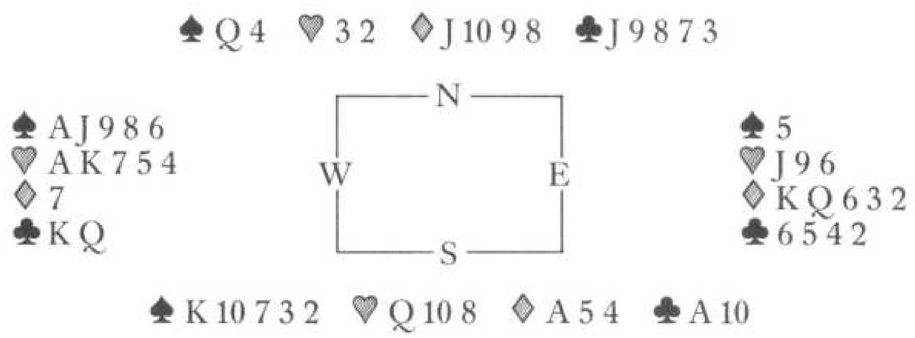
Contract: 4♠ doubled by South
Lead: ♢K

West wins the first trick with the ♢K, East playing the ♢J, and switches to the ♡6. East wins with the ♡K. Now the ♢10, covered by ♢Q, goes to West's ace. At trick four West plays ♢3 and East ♢8 – South ruffs. The ♠J is now led and run when West fails to cover. The trumps are drawn, plus one extra round. The ♠9 is played and all three players discard clubs (they have to to remain in with a chance). Now a club to the queen followed by the ♣A leaves South holding a master trump and the thirteenth club.

After the first three tricks it is clear that to justify his opening bid of one no trump and final double West is marked with ♣K and ♠Q. Furthermore, it seems that West must have started with ♡J76 and East with ♡AK5432. The spades are likely to be 3–0. To make the remainder of the tricks (the defence won the first three) declarer has to rely on an exotic type of heart–club squeeze. He cannot afford the luxury of laying down the ♠A, for that would only block the suit in the probable event of West's holding ♠Qxx. It is imperative that declarer should be in his own hand after drawing trumps so that he can continue playing trumps and bring off the squeeze.

18. TOUCH OF THE BLARNEY

N–S game; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	P	1NT	P
3♡	P	4♡	P
P	P		

Contract: 4♡ by West
Lead: ♢J

The ♢J is covered by the ♢Q and won by South's ♢A. South cashes ♣A (just in case West has a singleton that could be discarded on ♢K) and directs his mind to playing a trump to cut down declarer's spade ruffs in dummy. But he must play ♡Q, not a small one. West wins ♡A and starts ruffing spades: ♠A, spade ruff, ♢K and spade discard, ♣K, spade ruff and diamond ruff. Declarer cashes ♡K but is still left with one heart and one spade loser. One down.

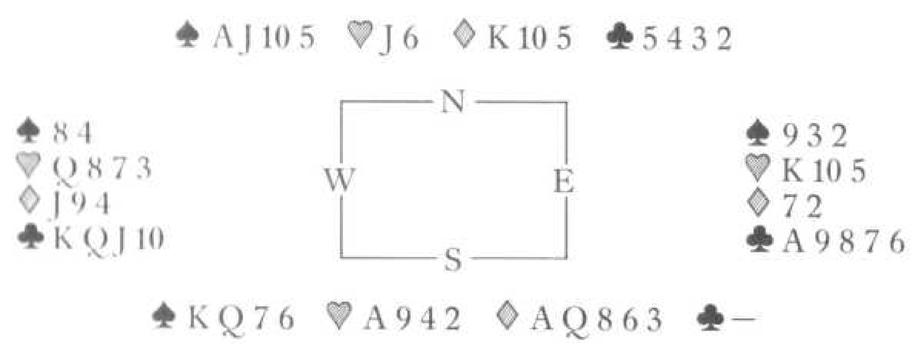
The star player on this hand was the popular writer and Irish international, Jack Kelly. He was defending in the South seat at the Killarney Congress and he appreciated two important factors. 1. It was vital to attack trumps to cut down the number of times declarer could ruff his spade losers. 2. The trump trick would come back to him providing he played the queen.

Notes

(Where the ♡8 is played at trick *two*.) In the event it does not matter whether South cashes the ♣A or not. Indeed, if he doesn't declarer will have a nasty moment as he tries to get out of dummy with a club. South will win, cash ♠K and than play ♠10. However, West ruffs with ♡7 and draws trumps. So all is well.

19. THE MIDAS TOUCH

N–S game; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	P	3♠	P
4♣	P	4♢	P
4♡	P	4♠	P
5♢	P	6♠	P
7♠	P	P	P

Contract: 7♠ by South
Lead: ♣K

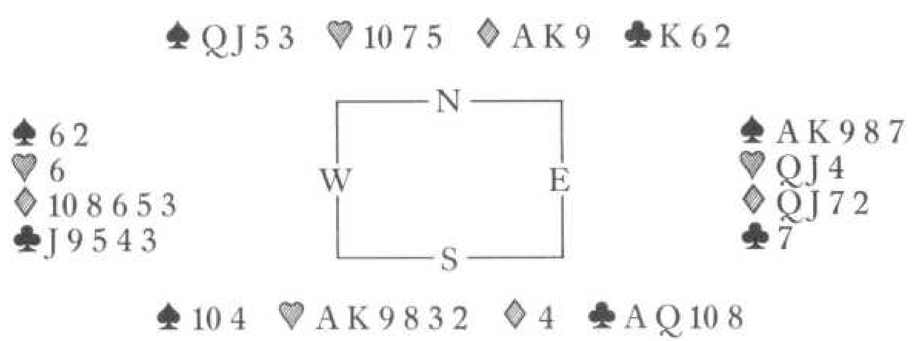
In order to succeed in this horrific contract declarer will have to score three ruffs in his own hand. That means he needs three entries to dummy: two to ruff clubs and one to draw trumps. As there will be only one trump entry he will need *two* diamond entries, which entails the assumption that West holds the ♢J.

The ♣K is ruffed with the ♠6 and the ♠7 is played to dummy's ace. A club is ruffed and a diamond is played to dummy's ten. Another club is ruffed. The ♢K is the entry to dummy to draw trumps, heart losers being discarded from hand. The last two diamonds are cashed (dummy throws ♣5 and ♡6) and the ♡A and ♠5 take tricks twelve and thirteen.

Without putting too fine a point on it, North and South playing rubber bridge together were not an ideal partnership. Their horrendous bidding sequence would make most players squirm. South bid one spade first to give him the maximum chance of playing the hand. North could only support the spades and after that it seems that the partnership were driving without brakes. The curious thing is that after the club lead the contract can be made and to give South his due he took full advantage of the lie of the cards. He appreciated that the ♢J would have to be with West if he were to obtain three entries to dummy (two to ruff clubs and one to draw trumps). Proceeding along these lines he duly landed his contract. This happy result seemed to ease the normally strained relationship, at least for the time being. However, one can't help wondering how it would have been had West led *any* other suit. The club looks natural, but without that lead the contract has no chance.

20. METHOD IN HIS MADNESS

Game all; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♣	1♠	2♡	P
2NT	P	4♣	P
4♡	P	4♠	P
5♡	P	P	P

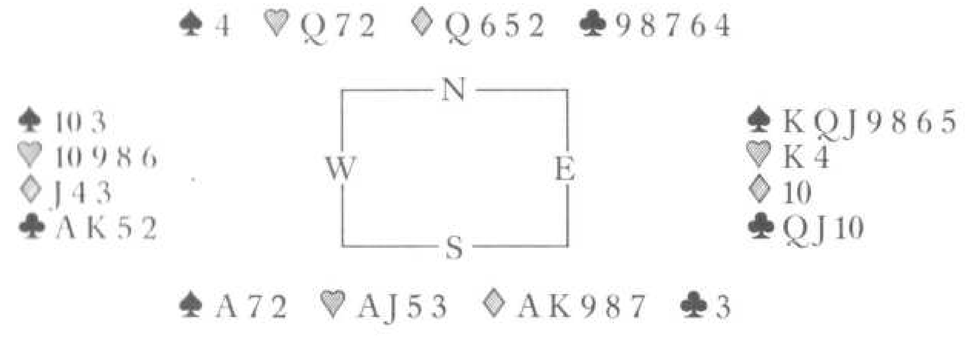
Contract: 5♡ by South
Lead: ♠6

Having taken two top spades, East switches to the ♣7. Declarer should win in dummy and play the ♡10 – letting it run if East fails to cover. If East does cover, dummy is re-entered with a diamond, a club is discarded on the other top diamond and the trump finesse taken against East.

This hand occured in the European Championships in Palermo, Britain *v* Austria. In the open room Terence Reese (S) and Boris Schapiro (N) played in three no trumps and Schapiro had no difficulty in collecting ten tricks after an initial spade lead. In the closed room the British East–West pair were Ben Franks (E) and Joe Lazarus (W). The Austrian North–South got a little carried away in the bidding, eventually stopping in five hearts. Franks could see that a third round of spades would almost certainly let the cat out of the bag, so he switched to a club. There was an anxious moment as a trump was led from dummy, but the Austrian declarer failed to draw the right inference and played his ace so the contract was defeated by one trick.

21. BACK TO THE WALL

Game all; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
3♠	Dbl	P	4♠
P	6♢	P	P
P			

Contract: 6♢ by South
Lead: ♠10

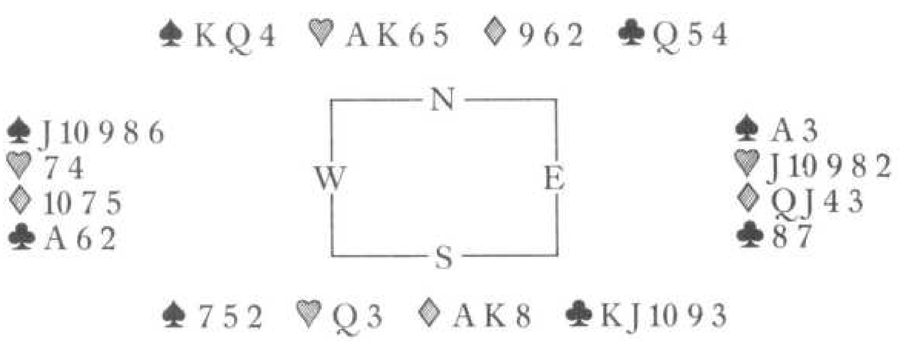
Declarer should win the ♠A and exit with his singleton club. Perhaps East wins and plays a second spade. Dummy ruffs and a club is ruffed in hand. The ♢A is cashed and declarer's last spade led towards dummy. In order to avoid being squeezed out of either heart or club control, West follows with a trump! Dummy overruffs and returns a small heart. ♡J and ♡A take the next two tricks, followed by a heart to dummy's queen. A club ruff, heart ruff and a last club ruff leaves declarer with the ♢K for his twelfth trick.

Notes

1. Another equally good method of making the contract is to aim to ruff three losers in dummy but if declarer draws a round of trumps at the wrong time he will be defeated. He must realise that when trumps are finally drawn he must use dummy's queen and his own ace and king to avoid making the jack a winner for West. However if West is permitted to lead a trump (which he will surely do if declarer lead a club) and dummy's queen wins then when declarer tries to ruff his third spade, West will defeat the contract by playing the Jack of trumps. Therefore declarer must ruff both spades before playing a club. He can ruff a spade at trick two, finesse the ♡J, ruff another spade and then play a club. He wins the trump return with the queen, plays a heart to the ace, and one back to the queen. He then ruffs a club, ruffs his heart loser with dummy's last trump, ruffs another club and finally draws trumps. A masterpiece of timing!
2. If declarer plays for two spade ruffs and takes two rounds of hearts before giving up the club, West can give his partner a heart ruff.

22. THE INQUEST

N–S game; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
P	1♣	P	1♡
P	1NT	P	3NT
P	P	P	

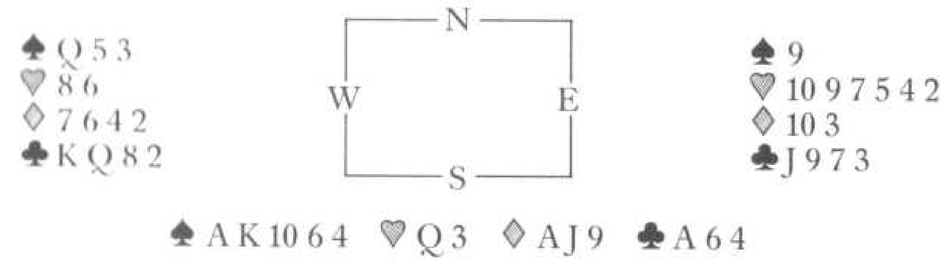
Contract: 3NT by South
Lead: ♠J

Declarer should play a low spade from dummy. When he obtains the lead he K.O.s the ♣A and will then come to ten tricks.

This hand was played in a Gold Cup match in the 1969/70 season. In one room 3NT presented no problem when played by North. In the other room the declarer was South, a member of a star-studded team who in fact made their exit from this competition after this match. He played the ♠K at trick one and so his 3NT contract finished on the floor. The inquest that followed was uncompromising in apportioning the blame. Although South pleaded that his play was normal and that to duck savours of *ex post facto* analysis, it was pointed out that to duck would lose only when West had led from ♠AJ10xx and the ♣A. As West had not overcalled with one spade, not vulnerable against vulnerable opponents, this was an improbable holding. 'Guilty', was the unanimous verdict.

23. QUE SERA, SERA

Game all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	P	4♠	P
5♣	P	5♡	P
6♠	P	P	P

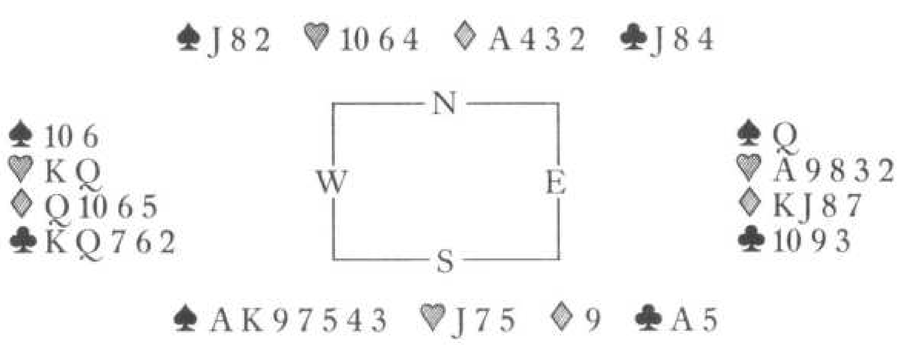
Contract: 6♠ by South
Lead: ♣K

South wins the opening lead and lays down ♠AK; East follows to the first round but discards the ♡2 on the second. The next three tricks are ♢A, ♢J and ♢K. When East shows out on the third diamond, the ♢Q is cashed, declarer discarding a club. Three top hearts follow. West ruffs the last heart but it has taken care of South's last club.

This hand comes from a keenly contested game of rubber bridge. South was noted for his lessons to all and sundry but he slipped up badly when faced with this problem. For the contract to succeed it is necessary to find West with at least three diamonds, therefore diamonds must be tackled *before hearts*. If the diamonds divide 3–3 then South takes a discard on the hearts before playing the thirteenth diamond. But if West happens to hold four diamonds – as is the case here – then declarer disposes of one of his club losers before playing on hearts.

24. BAITING THE TRAP

Love all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	P	1NT	P
4♠	P	P	P

Contract: 4♠ by South
Lead: ♡K

The ♡K and ♡Q take the first two tricks and then West switches to the ♠6, East following with the queen. At the next trick South plays the ♣5 which West wins with the ♣Q. He now exits with ♠10, won by dummy's ♠J. Four more trumps, the ♣A follow. Next, on the ♠4 West lets go the ◇10 in order to keep the club guarded. Dummy now throws the ♣J and the pressure is on East. He has to retain the ♡A so he, too, throws a diamond. Dummy's ◇4 becomes declarer's tenth trick.

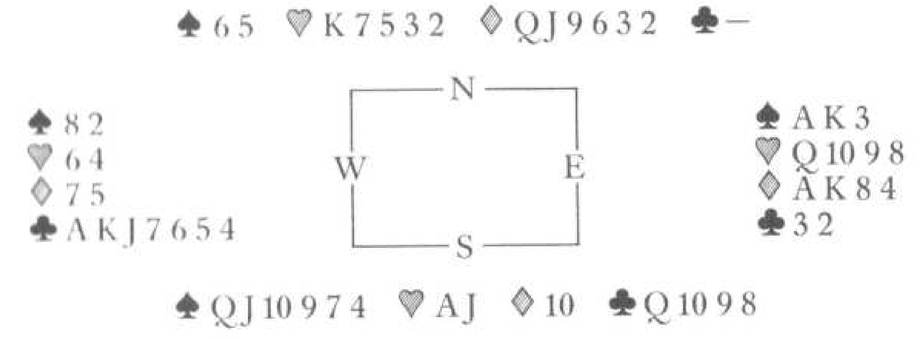
The star on this hand from a rubber bridge game was the Swiss international Pietro Bernasconi. He decided that there were three good reasons for playing the ♣5 at trick four.

1. To set the stage for the final act
2. To give West, should he win the trick, an easy exit card – ♠10
3. To avoid giving East the opportunity to signal for a diamond switch.

The play went exactly as Bernasconi foresaw, West winning the club and exiting with the ♠10. The bait had been accepted and the rest was comparatively plain sailing.

25. THE BOOBY TRAP

Love all; dealer East



The bidding:

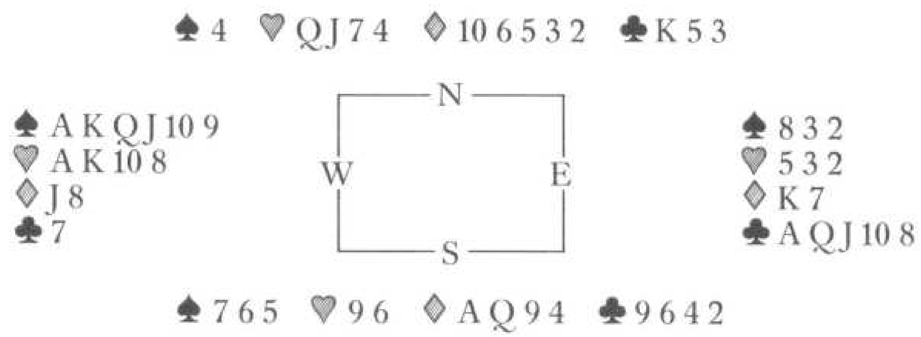
EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1♡	1♠	2♣	P
2NT	P	3NT	P
P	P		

Contract: 3NT by East
Lead: ♠Q

Declarer wins the opening lead with ♠A and plays the ♣3. South must step in with the ♣Q to give declarer every chance of going wrong. If declarer falls into the trap he will win the club in dummy . . . and go two down. If South plays any other club declarer will follow his original intention and duck the trick. The marked finesse of the ♣J later gives him six club tricks.

26. NO PARKING

Game all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
P	2♠	P	3♣
P	3♡	P	4♠
P	4NT	P	5♢
Dbl	5♠	P	P
P			

Contract: 5♠ by West
Lead: ♢3

South wins the first trick with ♢Q (3, 7, Q, 8) and cashes the ♢A (A, J, 2, K). He must now play the ♣2! If South fails to play a club – let's say he plays ♡9 – North will be squeezed in clubs and hearts.

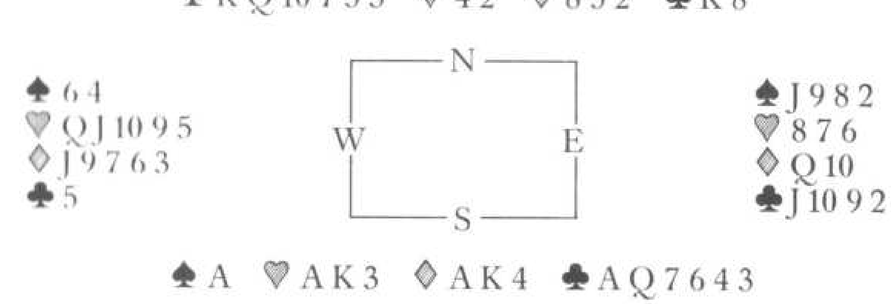
South in this hand was Jan Wohlin, perhaps the most brilliant player ever to represent Sweden. At a critical stage in a match against a British touring team, Wohlin's defence drove the last nail into the British coffin. He returned the ♣2 at trick three. With at least ten cards marked in the major suits West could hold at most one club, so Wohlin reasoned that the club switch could not cost. How right he was! Left with the club link to dummy, West would only have to run his trumps to exert irresistible pressure on North.

Notes

1. If South continues with a third diamond, West throws a heart and the simple club finesse is enough to get him home.
2. If South switches to a heart or a trump, West draws trumps, cashes the ♡AK and continues playing trumps, squeezing North.

27. A GOOD POLICY

Game all; dealer South
Rubber bridge



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2♣	P	2♠	P
3♣	P	3♠	P
4NT	P	5♣	P
5NT	P	6♡	P
6NT	P	P	P

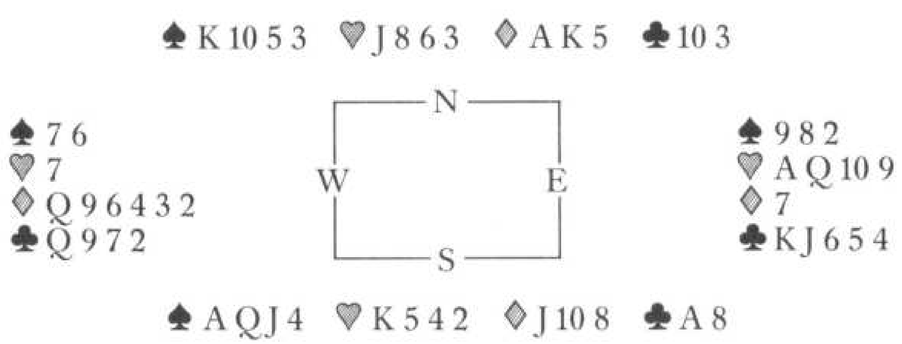
Contract: 6NT by South
Lead: ♡Q

South should win the heart lead, cash ♠A and play a low club to dummy's eight. East wins this trick and returns a heart. South wins, enters dummy with ♣K, cashes the ♠KQ, throwing his two losers in the red suits, and returns to his hand with the ♢A to cash the remainder of the cards which are now high.

Initially it appears that N–S have been somewhat pusillanimous in the bidding since all thirteen tricks will present no problem if either black suit breaks favourably, or the ♠J comes down in two rounds. However, declarer should invest in a small insurance policy to guard against distributional storms. Having won ♡A he must cash the ♠A, to unblock the suit, and then duck a club (small to the eight). East wins this trick but declarer takes the balance. If South fails to invest in insurance this will be just another of those hands that founder on the rocks of distribution.

28. TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A SMALL SLIP

Game all; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
P	1♣	Dbl	2♣
3♣	P	3♠	P
4♠	P	P	P

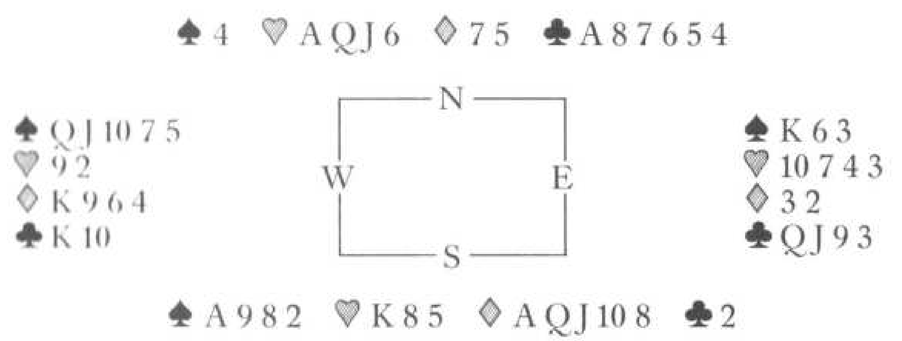
Contract: 4♠ by South
Lead: ♡7

East wins the first trick with ♡A and returns ♡9, South ducking and West ruffing. The ♣2 is returned to the ♣K and ♣A. Two rounds of trumps are followed by the ♢A and then South returns to hand with a third trump. A successful diamond finesse and a third diamond follows. Declarer now exits with ♣10. If West wins he must concede a ruff and discard. If East wins he can concede a ruff and discard or lead into the split heart tenace.

This hand was played in the 1970 world championships in Stockholm. East could have defeated 4♠ by returning the ♡Q at the second trick. Now South has no chance of an end-play against East who can easily exit with ♡10 when in with ♣J. Once East had made this small slip declarer was quick to take advantage of it.

29. FULL MARX

N–S game; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♢	1♠	2♣	2♠
3♢	P	3♡	P
3♠	P	4♢	P
5♢	P	P	P

Contract: 5♢ by South
Lead: ♠Q

South should refuse the first trick, allowing the ♠Q to hold. No matter how the defence continues, declarer must then make one spade ruff, four diamonds, four hearts, one spade and one club – a total of eleven tricks. Suppose West switches to a trump. Declarer wins, ruffs a spade, comes to hand with ♡K and plays ♢AQ. On regaining the lead he draws trumps and claims.

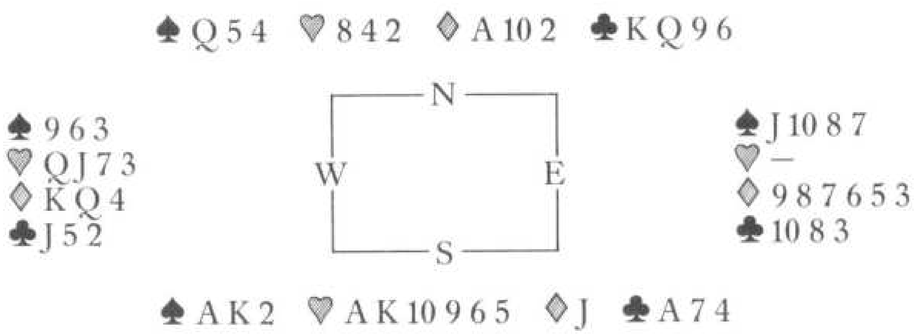
This hand was played in a Gold Cup match by Jack Marx, former European Champion and one of the founders of the Acol system. Although the contract was the same in the other room the rival declarer did not find Marx's winning line.

Notes

1. If South wins the first trick with the ♠A he will lose control. No doubt he will ruff a spade, return to hand with a heart and ruff a second spade. But now there is the problem of returning to hand to draw trumps. The ♣A and a club ruff reduce South's trumps to the same number as West's, so that when West obtains the lead with the ♢K he continues spades forcing South again. West now has trump control.
2. If, instead of ruffing a spade, South decides to rely on the ♢K being with East (Kx or Kxx) and uses dummy's diamonds to finesse – West will hold off the first round but will win the second. That's when the roof will fall in.

30. EVERY CLOUD HAS A SILVER LINING

E–W game; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2♡	P	3♡	P
3♠	P	4♢	P
5♣	P	6♣	P
6♡	P	P	P

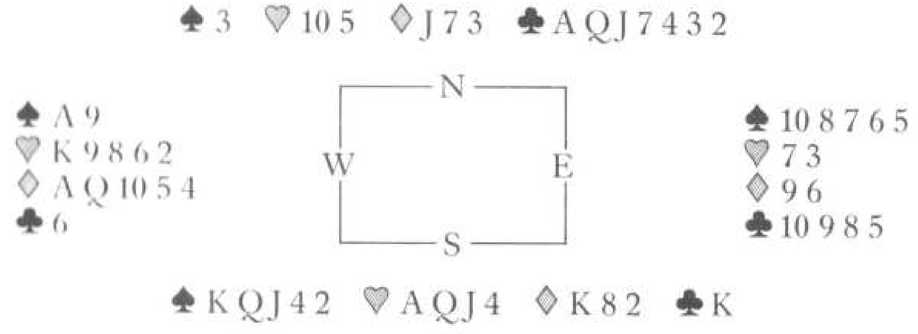
Contract: 6♡ by South
Lead: ♢K

Declarer wins the diamond lead with the ace and plays a heart from dummy. It is a nasty jolt when East discards a diamond. However, the ♡A takes the second trick, then, entering dummy twice, he ruffs two diamonds, cashes the four top black suit winners and at trick eleven plays ♡10. West wins this trick but has to concede the last two tricks to South.

This hand occurred in the 1969 British Trials for the European Championships. Three Souths made six hearts. One arrived at 7♣ – making ten tricks. One played in 7♡ doubled and was apparently so depressed when he saw the trump break that he just conceded *two* down. At the last table the declarer, one of the best young players in the country, was in the popular contract of 6♡ and conceded one down as soon as East discarded on the first round of trumps. Admittedly the distribution in the side-suits was kindly, but after the harsh trump break South was entitled to anticipate some compensation, although apparently some of the players had not heard of a cloud with a silver lining.

31. THE FOOTHOLD

E–W game; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♡	P	P	Dbl
2♢	3♣	P	3NT
P	P	P	

Contract: 3NT by South
Lead: ♢5

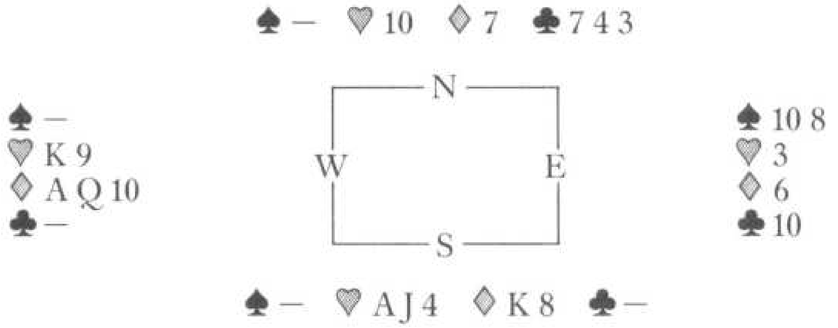
Declarer plays the ♢J from dummy which holds. A spade to the king loses to West's ace. West clears the diamonds, playing ace and another, and East discards the ♡3 on the third round. Declarer now cashes ♠Q J, ♡A and ♣K. The rest is plain sailing. A low spade concedes the lead to East who cashes one more spade winner but then has to give dummy the last three clubs. Declarer makes two diamonds, two spades, one heart and four clubs.

This hand occurred in a high-stake game of rubber bridge in London in November 1970. Once declarer appreciated that West almost certainly had five hearts, and that he was counted for five diamonds and two spades and therefore couldn't hold more than one club, the rest was easy. It only remained to cash the ♣K, remove East's remaining heart and use him as a stepping-stone – via the small spades – to dummy's club winners. The interesting point about this deal is that there is virtually no defence to beat the contract.

Notes

1. Some very interesting possibilities occur if declarer leads the ♡5 from dummy at trick two and plays the queen from his hand.
   (a) If West wins he must immediately return a heart, otherwise declarer can unblock his ♣K and use the ♡10 as an entry to dummy's clubs. Declarer then plays ♣AQJ, discarding two small spades and leads a spade. He will then make at least two spades, three hearts, one diamond and three clubs. If he fails to play ♣AQJ then West will win the spade and lead back a club and declarer will be unable to return to his hand to make his spade and heart winners.

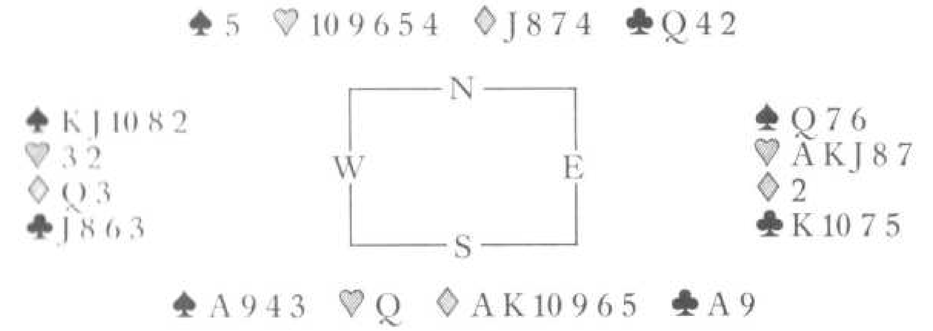
(b) If West ducks, declarer abandons hearts, plays ♣AQJ and then a spade. West does best to win the spade and play back a spade (any other return costs a trick immediately). South cashes another spade to leave himself with the lead in the following position having already won seven tricks.



He has a choice of A♡ followed by 4♡ which will compel West to give a trick in diamonds or he could lead a diamond and West will have to give him two tricks in hearts.

2. If declarer fails to put up the ♢J on the first round, he will go down.
3. If declarer exits with a spade before first taking away East's remaining heart, he will go down.

Love all; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1♡	Dbl	1♠	P
2♠	3♢	3♠	4♢
P	5♢	P	P
P			

Contract: 5♢ by South
Lead: ♡3

East wins the first trick with the ♡K and switches to the ♢2. South plays ♢A (West plays ♢3), cashes ♠A and ruffs a spade. Now comes the key play, ♣Q, and when East covers with ♣K he is allowed to hold the trick. The heart continuation is ruffed and followed by a spade ruff and the ♣A. The last spade is ruffed with dummy's last trump and declarer returns to hand with a club ruff to play the ♢K and claim the remainder of the tricks.

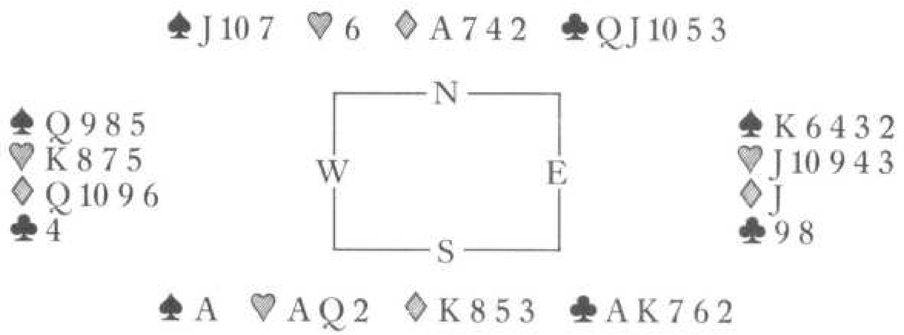
When this hand was played in the 1964 Master's Pairs most declarers failed to see the communication problem in time, woodenly returning to hand via the ♣A and heart ruff (at trick five declarer should play ♣Q from dummy and allow East to hold the trick). Now, at the critical point, the lead was in dummy and declarer had to play a club or a heart. In either case there was no way to prevent the promotion of West's ♢Q.

Notes

1. If declarer fails to play the ♣Q and duck it, he will be unable to return safely to his hand to draw the ♢Q. What happens then is that the ♢Q becomes promoted so that the defence make one heart, one diamond and one club.
2. If declarer draws two rounds of trumps he cannot cope with his three spade losers.

33. SET FAIR

Game all; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	P	P	1♣
P	3♣	P	6♣
P	P	P	

Contract: 6♣ by South
Lead: ♣4

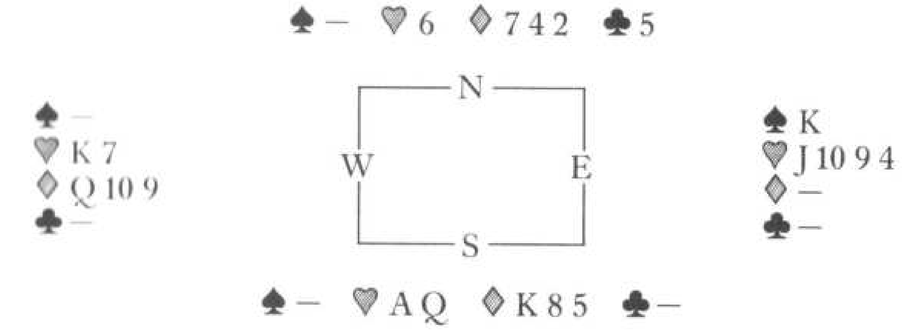
The trump lead can be won in either hand, the ♠A cashed, a second trump drawn and a spade is ruffed. Declarer then cashes the ♡A, ruffs a heart in dummy and a spade in hand. He then ruffs a second heart in dummy. The major suits are now eliminated and the stage is set for declarer to play a low diamond from either hand. Unless the diamonds are divided Q J 10 9 in one hand and the 6 alone in the other, he is home.

When this hand was played in a local tournament both declarers failed in the final contract of six clubs. The first declarer eliminated the major suits correctly but then cashed the ♢K. He could not recover. The second declarer eliminated the spade suit and then played the ♢K followed by the ♢A. The ♣5 was then played from dummy. East discarded the ♠K, South the ♡2 and West – the ♡8. Now declarer had a difficult guess. Eventually he took the heart finesse and went two down.

33. Set Fair *continued*

Notes

1. If declarer omits to eliminate both major suits he may run into trouble. In fact if he eliminates the spade suit only and then runs all his clubs he *can* succeed. The end position might be:

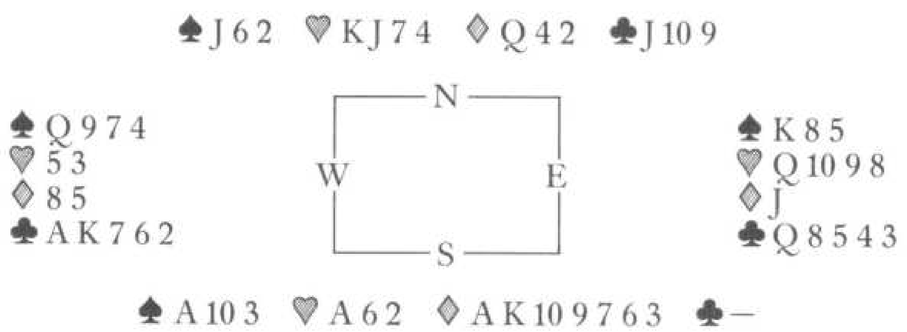


Dummy leads the ♣5, South throws the ♢5 and West is squeezed. However, this would be a poor way to play and in fact West could give declarer a hideous guess by blanking the ♡K. Besides, the diamonds might have been breaking so that there was really no problem all the time.

2. If declarer eliminates correctly but then cashes one or two top diamonds before exiting in the suit, he will go down.

34. INDESTRUCTIBLE

Game all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♢	P	1♡	P
2♠	P	3♢	P
3♡	P	4♢	P
5♢	P	P	P

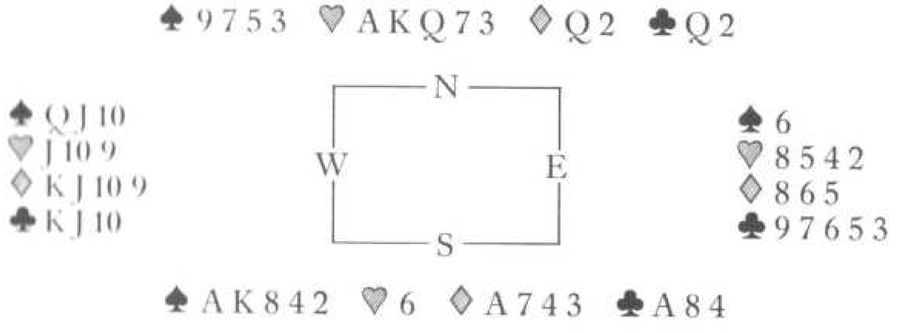
Contract: 5♢ by South
Lead: ♣K

Declarer should ruff the opening lead with a small diamond – but NOT with the ♢3. Cash ♢A and enter dummy with ♢Q – still retaining the ♢3 in his own hand. A second club is ruffed high and followed by ♡AK. Dummy's last club is led and South discards his losing heart. Regardless of the distribution, it is now impossible for the defence to avoid establishing either a heart or a spade trick for declarer, or concede a ruff and discard.

Superficially success seems to depend on a favourable lie of the cards in one of the majors. The ♡Q with West, a 3–3 heart break or the ♡Q(x) with East – they will all suffice. The spade suit is less likely to be rewarding, but a singleton or doubleton honour, or perhaps Kx or Qx with East, or both spade honours with East – any of these holdings might see declarer home. However, as long as South is careful to preserve the ♢3, and assuming the trumps are 2–1, declarer can make sure of his contract whatever the distribution. The extra entry to dummy, via the ♢4, enables declarer to play an elimination with loser on loser which ensures 100% success.

35. ALL IN GOOD TIME

N–S game; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1NT	P	P	Dbl
P	P	2♣	P
P	3♡	P	3♠
P	5♠	P	6♠
P	P	P	

Contract: 6♠ by South
Lead: ♠Q

South wins ♠A and cashes ♠K, East discarding ♣3. South now cashes ♡AK, discarding a low diamond, ruffs a heart and exits with a third round of trumps. West is now end-played and must lead one of the minors. Whichever one he chooses, dummy wins with the queen, the ace and a ruff dispose of that suit and the two losing cards in declarer's hand are discarded on the ♡Q7.

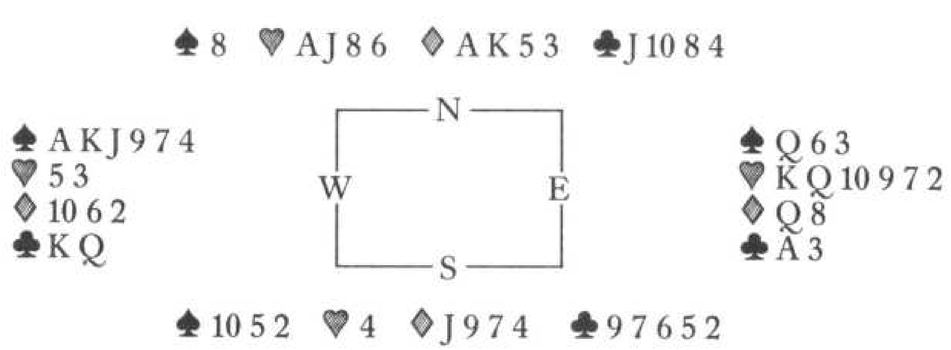
Having taken two rounds of trumps, it is essential for declarer to realise that *three top* hearts would cause discard problems. Furthermore, there is no urgency about taking the discards. Two top hearts and a heart ruff eliminate West's hearts and reduce declarer's minor suit holdings to ♢A74 and ♣A84. West is now thrown in with ♠Q and has to play a minor.

Notes

1. If declarer cashes the ♡AKQ he will squeeze his own hand. Whichever minor he reduces to a doubleton will be West's exit suit. This will leave declarer with two losers in the other minor, only one of which can be discarded on dummy's long heart.
2. If declarer gives West his trump trick before eliminating hearts, he fails.

36. THE RED LIGHT WAS GREEN

N–S game; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Dbl	Rdbl	2♣
2♠	3♣	4♠	P
P	P		

Contract: 4♠ by West
Lead: ♦K followed by ♦A

South should play the ♦7 (or ♦9) on the first trick and follow it with the ♦J – a clear suit-preference signal asking for a heart switch. The ♥A and another defeats the contract.

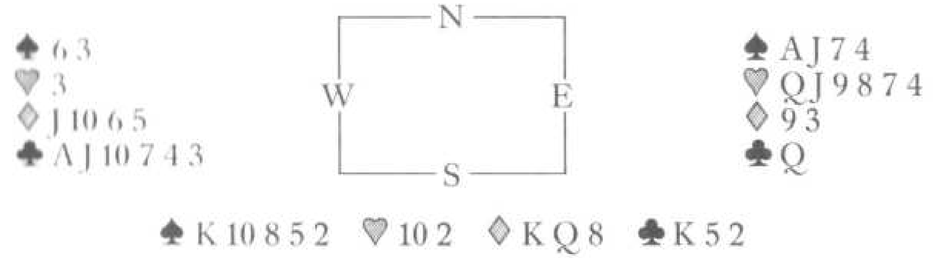
This hand was played at a big national congress in the sixties, and 4♠ succeeded at nearly every table. Where South played the ♦7 or ♦9 on the first round and followed with the ♦J North felt suitably encouraged to try the ♥A and another. Against this defence the declarer had to lose the first four tricks.

Notes

1. Left to himself North will surely switch to a club at trick three. Dummy wins, the ♠AK are cashed, the ♦10 is ruffed with ♠Q and it only remains to return to hand with ♣K, draw the last trump and concede a heart. Switching to a trump or playing a third diamond will not inconvenience the declarer.
2. It may look attractive for South to play the ♦J at trick one but this will only suggest to North that South has a diamond sequence headed by ♦J,10 and South will find it very hard to show the need for a heart switch.
3. The ♦4 at trick one will leave North concerned that declarer has ♦J and two others. He will switch to a club at trick two. Declarer wins with the ace and leads a diamond back, aiming to ruff one in dummy and not wishing to touch trumps yet, in case somebody has a singleton heart and three trumps and starts the 'high low' signal in trumps to show three and a desire to ruff something. Now South again has the chance to play the ♦J to ask for a heart. If North does lead the ♥A declarer will play the ♥5, not the ♥3 and South will need to have signalled clearly to persuade North that it is he who has the singleton.

37. A BEAUTIFUL EXECUTION

Game all; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1♥	1♠	2♣	3♠
P	P	P	

Contract: 3♠ by South
Lead: ♥3

Dummy wins the first trick with ♥A, South following with ♥10. The ♠9 is allowed to win the second trick and the next two tricks go to East's ♠A and ♣Q (declarer must not cover). East switches to ♦9, won by South's ♦K. The ♠K is cashed, West discarding a club, and then the ♦Q. Declarer now exits with a spade to East's ♠J. East leads the ♥Q which South should duck. East has to continue hearts. South and West throw clubs and dummy wins. Now the ♥6 is ruffed by declarer and West is squeezed. He cannot afford any of his three remaining cards. Declarer makes just nine tricks.

This hand occurred many years ago in a qualifying round of the Two Stars Championship, the main event at the Eastbourne Congress. The famous twins Bob and Jim Sharples were North–South: it was Jim who found the imaginative bid of 3♠ and Bob who played the hand so adroitly to land the contract.

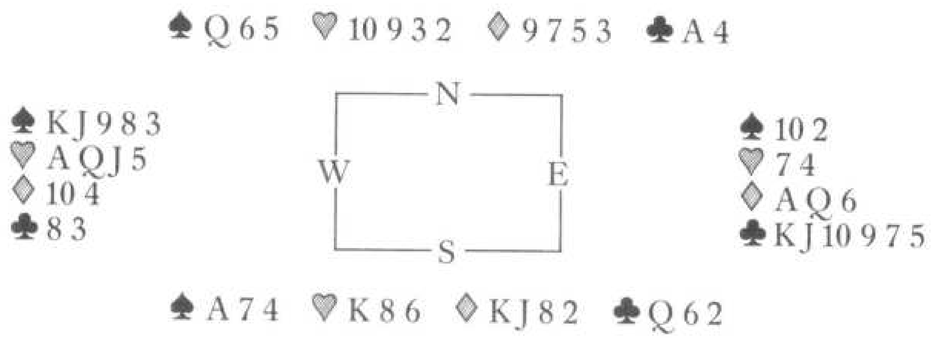
Declarer's first hurdle was to avoid a heart ruff, that is why he followed with the ♥10 at trick one leaving East unclear as to who has the heart singleton. Although it appears that there are still five losers, two spades and three clubs, the well-timed squeeze – it was essential to duck one round of hearts to rectify the count – forced West to surrender one of his winners.

Notes

A similar result can be achieved if declarer wins the ♥Q with dummy's ♥A and then ducks a heart back.

38. UP THE POLE

Love all; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
P	1♣	Dbl	Rdbl
2♣	Dbl	2♢	2♠
3♢	P	P	3♡
P	3NT	P	P
Dbl	P	P	P

Contract: 3NT doubled by East
Lead: ♢2

Dummy's ♢10 holds the first trick, North playing the ♢5. The ♣8 from dummy is run to South's ♣Q and South must now continue with a second diamond straight into declarer's AQ tenace. Cut off from his clubs declarer will probably run the ♠10. North wins with ♠Q and plays a third round of diamonds. Now there is no way that the declarer can avoid losing two clubs, two spades and one diamond.

The bidding indicates a light-hearted game of rubber bridge, as indeed it was. The South seat was occupied by the colourful ex-Polish international Michael Wolach who at trick three found the devastating defence of a second diamond right into declarer's AQ tenace. This immediately sacrificed one trick but its overall effect was to eclipse the club suit completely and declarer could find no way of coming to nine tricks.

It is true that North would have saved the day by going up with the ♣A and playing a diamond, but that might have been a suicidal move had declarer held a seven-card suit. As the play went South had to assume that his partner held the ♠Q and ♣A.

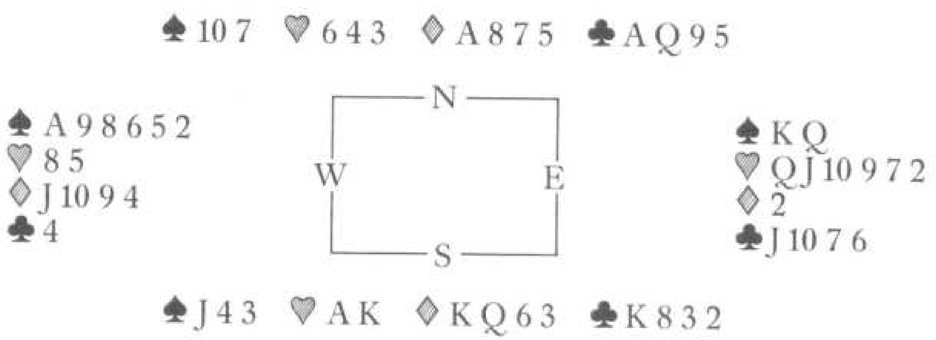
Notes

1. If South switches to a spade when he wins with ♣Q, declarer can put up the ♠K and play a club. Now he makes four clubs, two diamonds, one spade and two hearts (with the aid of the finesse).
2. A heart switch will serve little purpose. Declarer takes the finesse and exits with a club.

3. A club return to the ♣A allows North to play a diamond through declarer's ♢AQ, but declarer wins with the ♢A and cashes four clubs. On the last club South is going to find it impossible to discard safely. Dummy can throw the ♠J but South cannot discard the ♠A or a heart otherwise the heart finesse is enough to see declarer home. So South discards ♢J. Now the heart finesse followed by the ♠K end-plays South, who must concede the last two hearts to dummy.

39. ON THE RACK

E–W game; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♢	P	2♣	P
2NT	P	3NT	P
P	P		

Contract: 3NT by South
Lead: ♠6

East takes the king and queen of spades and switches to ♡Q. South wins and cashes ♢KQ, but East throws a heart on the second diamond. It is virtually certain that West holds six spades. He is known to hold four diamonds, so when the second top heart is cashed declarer realises that West cannot hold more than one club. The ♣A comes next and when West follows the count is complete. The ♢A forces another heart discard from East who is then thrown on lead with dummy's last heart. After making his two heart tricks he has to play a club and his club trick disappears.

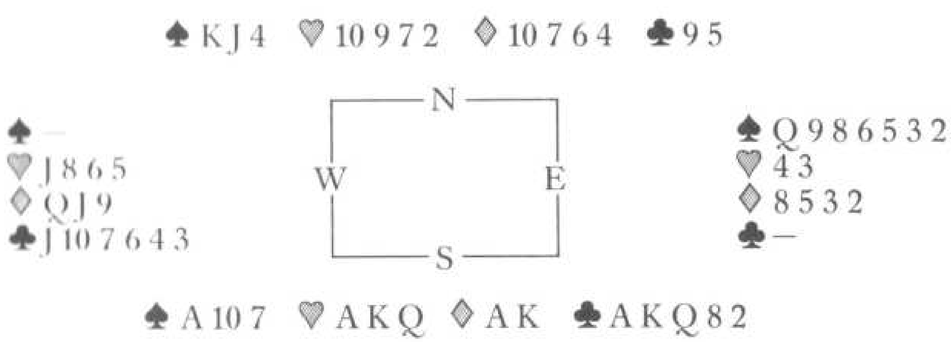
Since declarer can see that his contract is safe if one of the minor suits breaks 3–2, he must direct his mind to the correct order of play of these two suits. The club intermediates are better than the diamond intermediates and therefore offer more favourable chances in a possible end-game. So diamonds should be played before clubs. Having inferred the distribution of the spade suit, and proved that West has four diamonds and two hearts, it only remains to play the ♣A to fill in all the missing gaps.

Notes

Declarer might cash one club honour (correctly) but choose the ♣K instead of the ♣A (or ♣Q) – he will go down.

40. HALF A POUND OF FLESH

N–S game; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
3♠	5NT	P	6♢
P	6NT	P	P
P			

Contract: 6NT by South
Lead: ♢Q

Declarer cashes the ♣A (at trick two) and three rounds of hearts. East discards a spade on the ♣A and a second spade on the third round of hearts. To bring pressure on West declarer must now lose a spade trick to East! So the ♠7 is run to East's ♠8, West discarding a club. East returns a diamond which South wins with ♢K. The ♠A is cashed. Now the ♠10 is played to dummy's king and West is triple squeezed. If he throws a club, declarer's hand is high. If he unguards a red-suit, that suit is continued and he is squeezed on the two remaining suits.

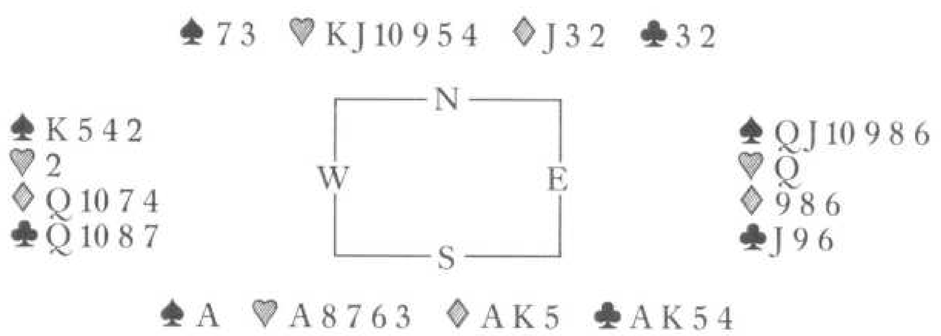
This hand has an amusing history. No one was too confident about the bidding sequence. North thought his partner was asking for a slam in one of the minors. South intended his bid to show a giant hand. Declarer was a modest performer who would have been totally incapable of the difficult play required to succeed. At trick six she led a spade and inadvertently touched dummy's ♠J. East, reared in the traditions of Mrs Battle, insisted that the ♠J be played. The *dénouement*, as West was inexorably squeezed, was a sweet experience for Portia and just retribution for Shylock!

Notes

1. If declarer successfully finesses East for the ♠Q he now cannot bring pressure on West because the link to dummy is severed. That leaves West with easy discards.
2. If declarer plays a low club early on, that is fatal.
3. If declarer plays ♠A before losing a spade trick to East, all East has to do now is return a spade and the defence will prevail.

41. NO SUBMISSION

Game all; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	P	P	2♣
P	2♢	P	2♡
P	5♡	P	6♢
P	7♡	P	P
P			

Contract: 7♡ by South
Lead: ♡2

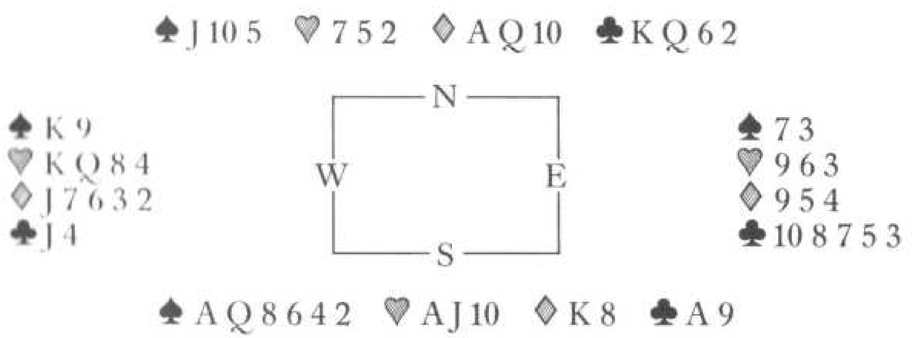
Declarer wins the heart lead with ♡A (it wouldn't matter if he chose ♡K), cashes the ♠A, crosses to dummy with a heart and ruffs a spade. He now runs the hearts. On the penultimate heart, South discards ♢5 and West is squeezed. If West discards a diamond the ♢AK are cashed and dummy is re-entered with a club ruff, while if he parts with a club South's long club is established for the thirteenth trick.

This hand virtually sealed the fate of the 1967/68 Silver Cup, the competition for those eliminated at the quarter- and semi-final stages of the Gold Cup. The winning team played quietly in six hearts while their opponents, the Scottish champions, bid to seven hearts. In practice South took the inferior line of the simple squeeze and Vienna Coup, arriving at an ending in which dummy has ♡10, ♢J and ♣3 and declarer has ♣K54. When the ♡10 was led East was able to control the club suit and the squeeze failed.

It is worth noting that this simple squeeze requires the hand with the guarded ♢Q to hold *five* clubs initially (26%), whereas the ruffing squeeze succeeds whenever the same hand holds four or more clubs and the ♢Q (47%).

42. SHE WOULD, WOULDN'T SHE

N–S game; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
P	1♠	P	2♣
P	3♠	P	4♢
P	4♡	P	4♠
P	5♣	P	6♠
P	P	P	

Contract: 6♠ by South
Lead: ♡K

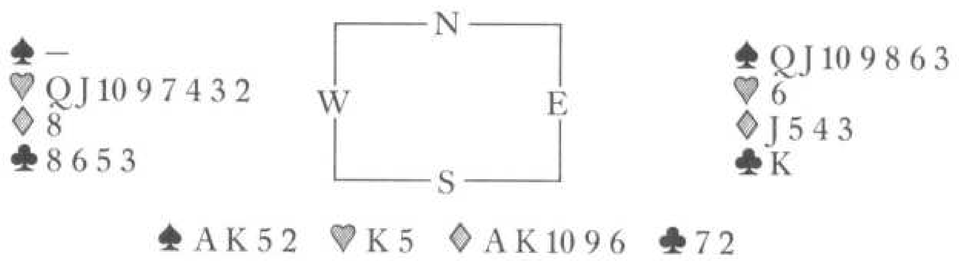
Declarer wins the ♡A, cashes three rounds of diamonds, discarding the ♡10, then three rounds of clubs discarding the ♡J. West ruffs the third club and plays a diamond. Declarer can ruff in dummy but must then play a spade to the ace. On no account must the spade finesse be taken. The ♠K drops and now there is just one trump to draw – and claim.

Notes

A good alternative method for declarer to adopt is to win the ♡A and immediately lay down the ♠A. If he then plays ♢KAQ, discarding a heart followed by ♣AKQ, West has to ruff with the ♠K and cannot put declarer to the test.

43. CHEST YOUR CARDS

Love all; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
3♠	3NT	P	7NT
P	P	P	

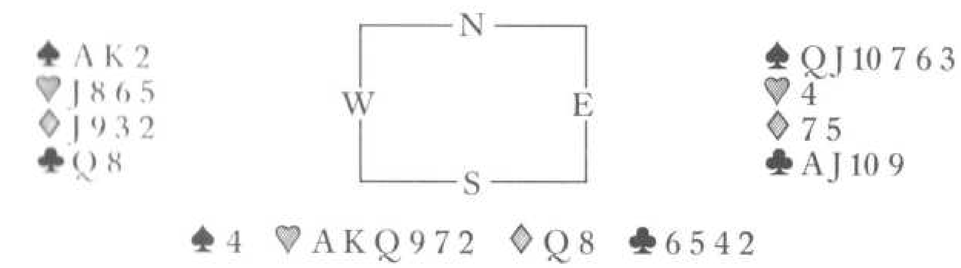
Contract: 7NT by South
Lead: ♡Q

Declarer wins the first trick with ♡A and plays ♢A followed by ♢Q, West discarding a heart. The marked diamond finesse is taken and the ♠A cashed, West throwing hearts both times. Now the ♡K is cashed, East throwing a spade. A club to the ace resolves all declarer's problems when East follows with the king.

This hand was played at the Eastbourne Congress many years ago by Kenneth Konstam, one of the world's most sparkling dummy players. At the point where Konstam played a club to dummy's ace, eschewing the finesse, he knew the exact distribution. West was known to hold precisely four clubs and if they were Kxxx they could not be picked up. Realising then that the finesse would be of no avail Konstam played for his one chance of making the grand slam – that East's lone club was the king. Naturally his partner was lavish in his praise of Konstam's play. Not so the player on Konstam's right, who played the remainder of that round with his cards held tightly to his chest!

44. KNEADING THE SHAPE

Game all; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	P	P	1♡
P	2♢	2♠	3♡
3♠	4♡	P	P
P			

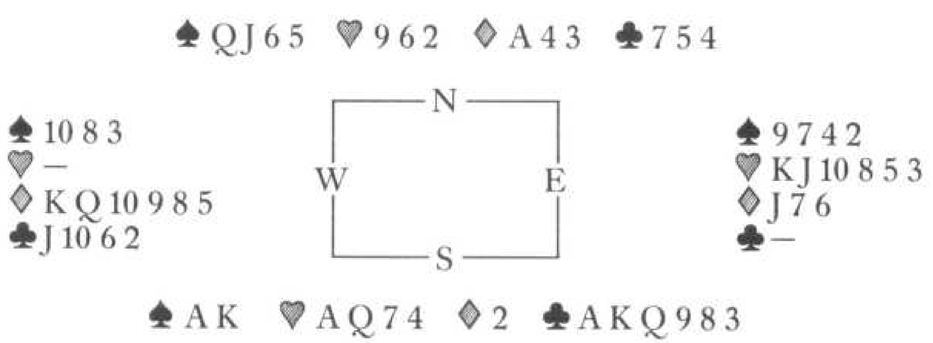
Contract: 4♡ by South
Lead: ♠A

When West mistakenly continues with a second spade (a club switch would have sunk declarer), South ruffs and cashes the ♡AK. On the second round of hearts East signals with the ♣J and prospects look grim. Needing three club discards, South cashes the ♡Q and the ♢Q and follows with the finesse of the ♢10. The ♢AK permit two club discards and then on the ♢6 declarer throws his third club. West ruffs, but he can now only take one more trick – his partner's ♣A.

When this hand occurred in real life the East–West bidding and defence were less than perfect. As the cards lie four spades cannot be defeated. But having allowed North–South to play (East might have bid —one for the road), West was particularly bovine in continuing with a second spade when a club switch looked so inviting. Declarer, on the other hand, was wide awake when he realised that he *needed* the diamonds to be 4–2, not 3–3, so that he could dispose of three losing clubs. East's ♣J discard was ominous, but in any case remembering that West passed originally, the ♣A was marked with East. How about the ♢J? It was more likely to be with four cards than with two. So declarer's plan was kneaded into shape, and the break he needed duly materialised.

45. A GREEK GIFT

N–S game; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3♢	P	4♢	5♣
Dbl	P	P	P

Contract: 5♣ doubled by South
Lead: ♢K

South should duck the opening diamond lead and ruff the continuation. He then draws three top trumps, cashes the ♠AK and plays the ♡A. If West refuses to ruff (or follows to the heart) he is then thrown in with the master trump and dummy takes care of the losers.

This hand occurred in a high stake rubber bridge game where both West and South were tigers. South decided that to justify the opening bid and the raise West was marked with six diamonds and East three. The double seemed to indicate that West held all the missing trumps. That left room for only three major suit cards. The stage was set for a very pretty coup. South ducked the ♢K and ruffed the continuation. He now planned to draw three top trumps, the ♠AK and, if West followed both times, play off the ♡A. If West ruffed he was welcome to the trick. If he discarded, or followed suit he would be thrown on lead with the master trump and dummy would take care of the losers. A brilliant scheme.

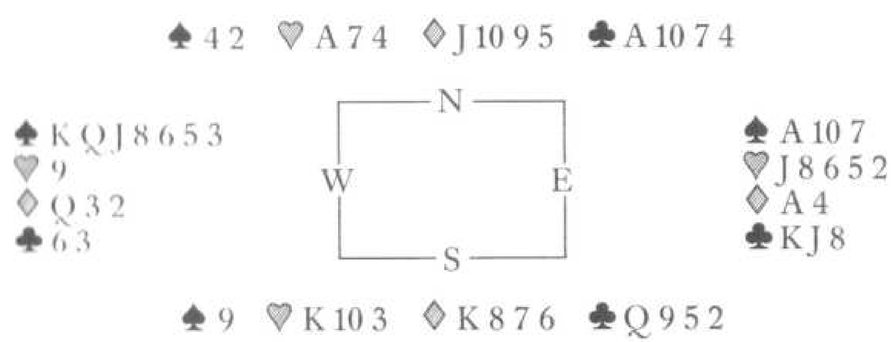
But West was also alert. It was clear from the play of the diamonds that South was hoping to force an entry to the table at a more appropriate moment. Accordingly, on the three top clubs West threw the six, the ten and the knave, in that order. South was compensated now by being able to pick up all the trumps without loss, but this turned out to be a Greek gift as East could no longer be prevented from taking two heart tricks. And that added up to one down.

Notes

If the declarer proceeds along the prescribed route to the point where he cashes the ♠AK, but then omits to cash the ♡A before exiting with a trump – he will succeed. But that is only because West's third major-suit card is a spade and not a heart.

46. FRAGILE HANDLE WITH CARE

Love all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
P	3♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Contract: 4♠ by West
Lead: ♢J

South wins the first trick with the ♢K and returns the ♡3. North wins with ♡A and switches to a small club. If declarer misguesses, playing the ♣J, the contract will go down.

This hand occurred in the Sunday Times International Pairs Championship, 1970. South was the Portuguese international C.S. Teixeira who appreciated that North was likely to hold the two missing aces so there were three good reasons for playing the ♡3. Firstly, it would give his partner, J.A. Debonnaire, a shrewd idea of whether to try and cash a second heart or switch to a club. Secondly, when South plays a low heart declarer is more likely to misplace the club honours if forced to a guess. Thirdly, a top heart may leave the wrong defender on lead and enable declarer to set up the heart suit and thus avoid the club guess. Debonnaire duly drew the right inference and returned a small club. A fine defence reaped its reward when the declarer played dummy's ♣J and went one down.

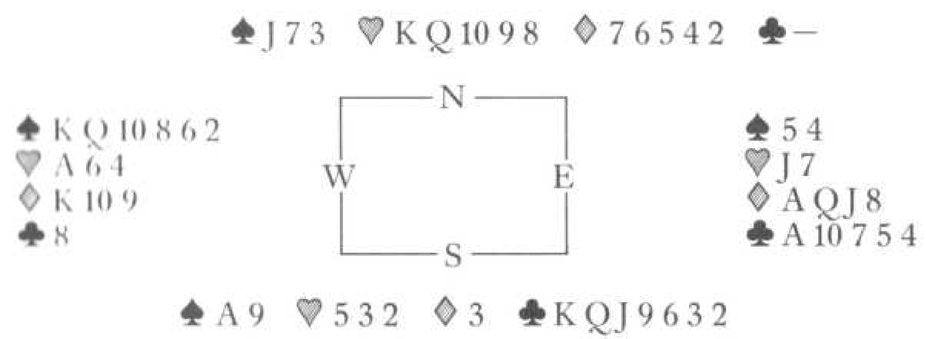
Notes

1. Suppose South switches to the ♡K. The contract will now succeed unless North specifically overtakes with ♡A and plays a club and West misguesses. More likely South will hold the trick and continue with a second heart (West ruffs and sets up a long heart for a club discard), but even if he exits with a diamond to dummy's ace, declarer still has sufficient entries to establish, and enjoy, a long heart. After the ♢A, the ♡5 is ruffed, dummy re-entered with a top spade, the ♡6 is ruffed and there are still two spade entries in dummy to establish and get to dummy's long heart.

2. A diamond or spade return at trick two will take away one valuable entry to dummy and if that defence is pursued when N–S take their heart trick dummy will be short of an entry to establish and enjoy the long heart. Then declarer will have to fall back on the club guess. However, he will have had time to build up a fair picture of the hand and may well get the club right.

47. A DANGEROUS LEGACY

Game all; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	P	2♣	P
2♠	P	3♢	P
3NT	P	P	P

Contract: 3NT by West
Lead: ♡K

West wins the third round of hearts with ♡A, dummy discarding a small club. The ♢9 is led to dummy's ♢J and a small spade played from the table. South contributes the ♠9, West ♠K and North ♠3. The ♢10 is won with dummy's ♢Q . . . and South discards the ♠A. Restricted to two tricks in spades (West can't continue the suit as then North would get in and cash his heart winners) declarer is held to eight tricks.

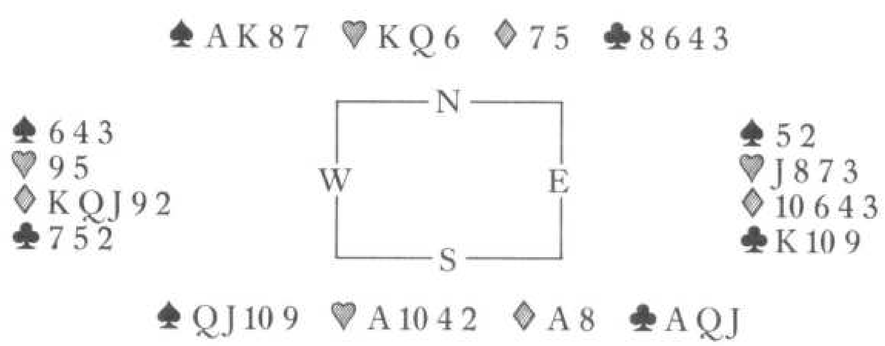
The way West has played his spades it is clear that the suit cannot be solid apart from the ace. Furthermore, if he is allowed to develop this suit he will surely make his contract. For this reason South must plan to discard his ♠A on the second round of diamonds. This thoughtful play will hold declarer to eight tricks.

Note

Of course declarer makes his contract if he plays a low spade from his hand at trick six, but this would be an outrageous gamble – or a brilliant piece of anticipation!

48. THE GRAY AREA

Game all; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♣	P	1♡	P
2♡	P	2♠	P
3♠	P	4♣	P
4♠	P	4NT	P
5♢	P	6♠	P
P	P		

Contract: 6♠ by South
Lead: ♢K

Declarer wins the diamond lead and draws three rounds of trumps followed by three rounds of hearts, finishing in dummy. When he finds that the hearts have not broken and the ♡J has not appeared, he takes the club finesse. Dummy is re-entered with a heart ruff to repeat the club finesse.

This hand was played in a multiple teams event, sometimes in game, sometimes in slam, sometimes by North and sometimes by South. With the ♣K being favourably placed most declarers were successful but there were several minus scores. Maurice Harrison-Gray, one of the successful declarers in 6♠, showed how the hand should be played to combine declarer's chances to the full. He won the ♢A, drew trumps and played three rounds of hearts, ending in dummy.

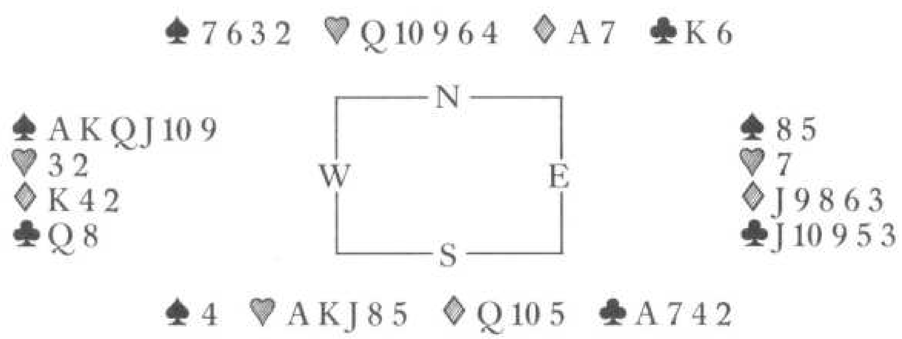
Had the hearts broken, or the ♡J appeared in two rounds, he would have returned to hand with the ♣A, discarded his losing diamond on the ♡10 and conceded a club. As the play went, Gray was still able to fall back on the club finesse and furthermore he had a second entry to dummy to repeat the finesse. Those players who relied solely on the ♣K being with East were lucky. Gray's method succeeds even when the ♣K is wrong providing the hearts are 3–3 or the knave appears in two rounds.

Notes

Trying to combine his chances, declarer wins the ♢A, draws trumps and then plays ♡K, ♡Q and the ♡6 to ♡A. Now he *has* to bank on the club finesse but has only one entry to dummy – the heart ruff. He finds the club finesse is successful but he cannot get back to dummy to repeat it. The only hope now is that East holds a doubleton club. So that's one down.

49. ONLY ONE MORE

Love all; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
P	1♡	2♠	4♡
P	P	4♠	5♡
P	6♡	P	P
P			

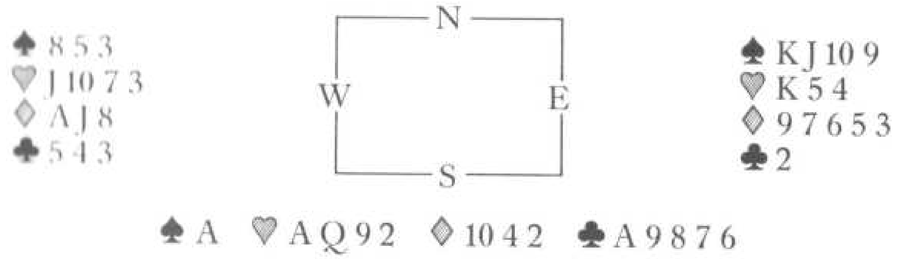
Contract: 6♡ by South
Lead: ♠A followed by ♠K

South ruffs the second spade, enters dummy with the ♡9, ruffs a spade with ♡A, returns to dummy with ♡Q and ruffs dummy's last spade with ♡K. The ♢Q is now led, covered by the ♢K, and won with dummy's ♢A. Three more trumps are cashed and East is squeezed, being unable to keep the ♢J and ♣J 10 9.

South was most undisciplined to bid again after 5♡. It is bids like this that tend to bring a promising partnership to premature dissolution. However, having recovered from the initial shock of observing that there was no obvious parking place for his losing diamond, South did the only thing you can do when a bad bid lands you in an ambitious contract – make it, or else . . . Using dummy's trumps to draw those outstanding, while at the same time ruffing spades back to hand, there remained just one final formality. Transfer diamond control to East so that he could be squeezed in the minors. The ♢K was marked with West on the bidding but there was no reason why East shouldn't hold the ♢J. When the ♢Q was played West was forced to cover and now East had control. Long clubs with East was always likely but in any case declarer had to assume they were there otherwise there would be no squeeze.

50. THE THREE CARD TRICK

Game all; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♠	P	2♣	P
3♣	P	3♡	P
5♣	P	6♣	P
P	P		

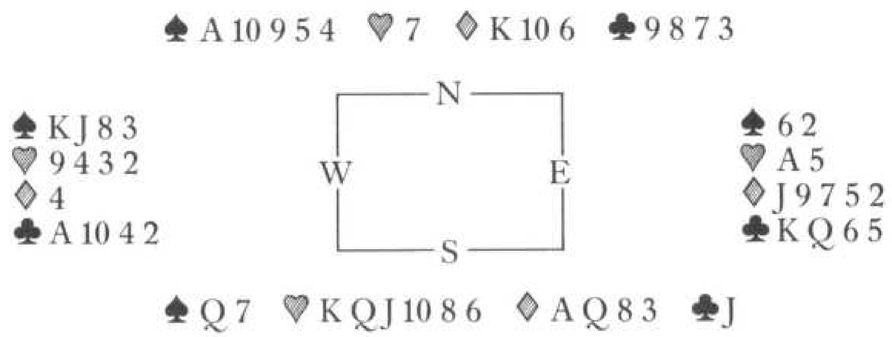
Contract: 6♣ by South
Lead: ♣5

The ♣10 wins the first trick and the heart finesse (♡Q) wins the second. The ♠A is cashed and then a diamond is played to West's ace. A second club is won in dummy. A spade ruff, a diamond to the ♢K and a second spade ruff is followed by the ♡A and a heart ruff. The ♠7 is led and ruffed with the ♣A, and West is squeezed.

This hand was played by one of the world's great players, Tim Seres of Sydney, Australia. North's jump to 5♣ on an aceless hand was optimistic, but no doubt he had seen Seres work miracles many times before. If North wanted to be in 5♣ then South certainly wanted to be in six, and so the stage was set. It only needed West to play his part by finding the one and only damaging lead and the moment had arrived for history to be created. The three-card ending is most unusual as West is triple squeezed when one of the cards he needs to retain is a losing trump. As a result of this hand a new squeeze was born and entered the record books as the Sydney Squeeze or the Seres Squeeze.

51. WHEN IT'S RIGHT TO BE WRONG

E–W game; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	P	P	4♡
P	P	P	

Contract: 4♡ by South
Lead: ♢4

Declarer wins the diamond lead with the ♢A and plays a heart (say the ♡Q). East wins, cashes the ♣K and then plays a diamond for West to ruff. West exits with ♣A, ruffed by declarer. Three rounds of trumps follow. On the fourth trump East discards the ♣6. Dummy is entered with the ♢K and a club is ruffed. The ♢Q now squeezes West in the black suits.

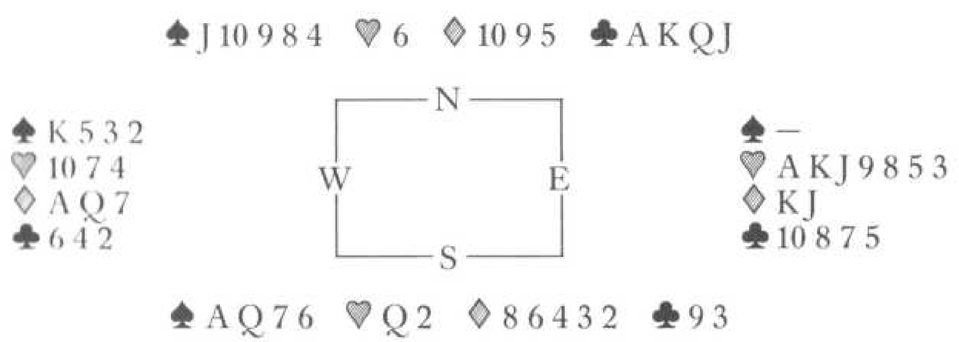
This hand comes from the 1984 World Olympiad held in Seattle and features Sandra Landy, the British World Champion. Purists might frown at her leap to four hearts after three passes, and looking at all four hands it would seem that they have a strong case. The match in question was Great Britain *v* the Netherlands. In one room the Dutch North–South settled for a contract of two diamonds which was just made. In the other room Sandra eventually managed to justify her optimism by landing her contract of four hearts. And that is the surest way there is to quell criticism! It is true that East played a rather friendly defence. She might have beaten the contract by two tricks had she returned the ♢2 before playing the ♣K. West could then have underled the ♣A and received a second ruff. Also, throwing the ♣6 on declarer's fourth round of trumps was suicidal. Still, bridge is a game of mistakes and the winners are usually those who keep their own to a minimum and capitalise on their opponent's.

Notes

If declarer fails to play out all her trumps but one she won't give East the opportunity to throw the wrong card and the contract will go down. Equally, if she plays *all* her trumps she will go down.

52. WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE?

N–S game; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♠	3♡	3♠	4♡
P	P	P	

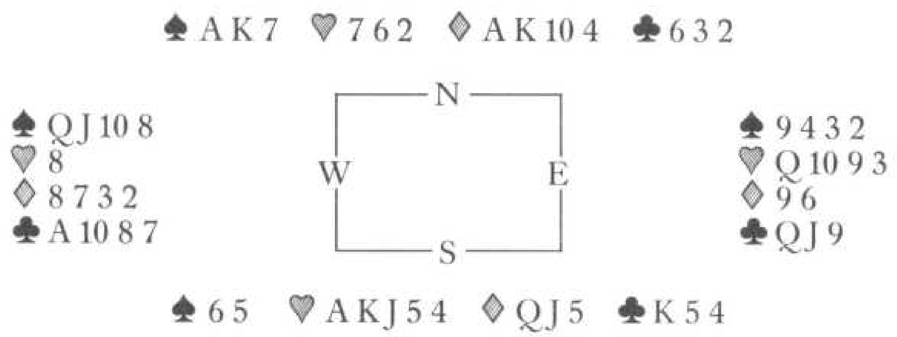
Contract: 4♡ by East
Lead: ♣9

The opening lead strikes gold when North wins with ♣J and continues with the ♣A and ♣K. On the third round of clubs South should discard the ♠A! That should be enough to persuade North to continue with a fourth club to defeat the contract (South's ♡Q is promoted).

Howard Schenken, the famous American Master, defended this hand from the South seat in the Cavendish Club, New York. His partner was a player of modest ability, and Schenken decided that this was no time for half-measures. At trick three he made the spectacular discard of the ♠A. With the ♠K clearly visible in dummy North really had no option but to continue with a hesitant ♣Q. His puzzled frown gave way to enthusiastic praise when he appreciated the skill of his partner's discard.

53. MANNA IN DISGUISE

Game all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♡	P	2♢	P
2♡	P	4♡	P
P	P		

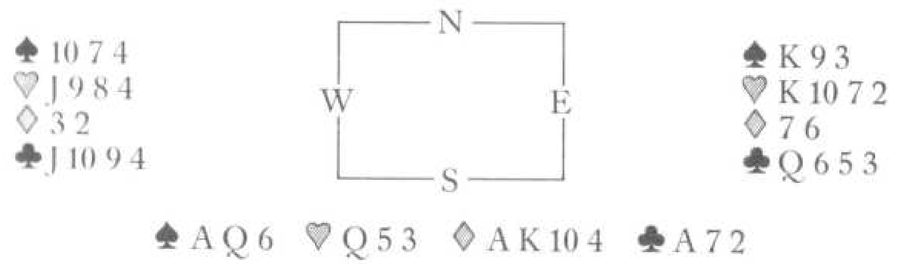
Contract: 4♡ by South
Lead: ♠Q

Dummy wins the spade lead and plays the ♡2, East follows with the ♡3 and South . . . ? He should follow with the ♡4! West wins this trick cheaply with the ♡8, but when declarer regains the lead a top heart reveals the position and the trumps can be picked up without loss. This procedure ensures that South's ♣K cannot be attacked by East – until South has drawn trumps and taken one discard.

The tactics required to succeed on this hand are similar to someone investing in a shrewd insurance policy. The ♣K is in danger of attack, but only if East can obtain the lead. Declarer, therefore, invests in a policy that provides the maximum chance of keeping him out.

54. THE SCIENCE OF BEING LUCKY

Love all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♢	P	1♠	P
3NT	P	4♢	P
4♠	P	6♢	P
P	P		

Contract: 6♢ by South
Lead: ♣J

The club lead is won in dummy and trumps are drawn in two rounds. The ♣A and a club ruff place the lead back in dummy for a successful spade finesse. The ♠A and a small spade throw East on lead for the first time. But he now has the unenviable choice of leading away from his ♡K, enabling declarer to make two tricks in the suit, or conceding a ruff and discard that will do just as well (if East plays a club – the only alternative choice – declarer ruffs in hand and discards the ♡6 from dummy).

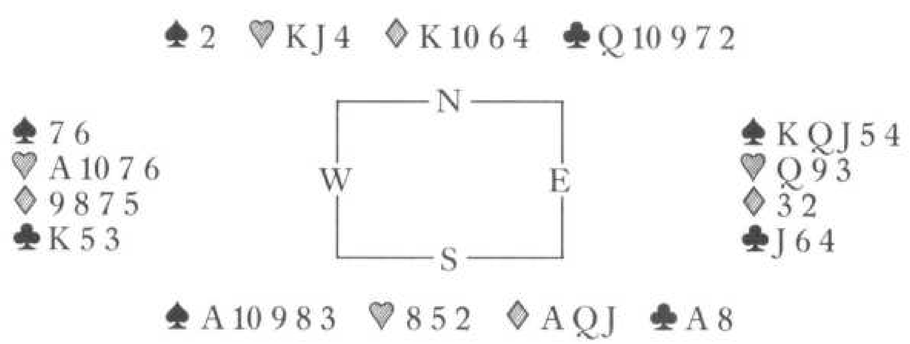
The bidding was aggressive, to say the least. However, the ♠10 in either the North or South hand would have made the slam a reasonable speculation, and even the best systems sometimes fail to locate tens! Having arrived in six diamonds, South sought to prove that there is no law against being lucky – and a little skill always helps. The plan was simple enough: draw trumps, eliminate clubs and either play the spade suit for no losers (Kx or singleton K with East) or throw East on lead to make a helpful play – lead away from his ♡K or concede a ruff and discard. The moral is: when you need things to go right – play the cards as though this will happen. Surprising how often Lady Luck decides to smile.

Notes

If declarer plays ♠J from dummy, instead of a small one, East will cover and now the third round of spades will be won by West, and the heart switch defeats the contract.

55. THE GUESS THAT WASN'T

N–S game; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
P	1♠	P	2♣
P	2NT	P	3NT
P	P	P	

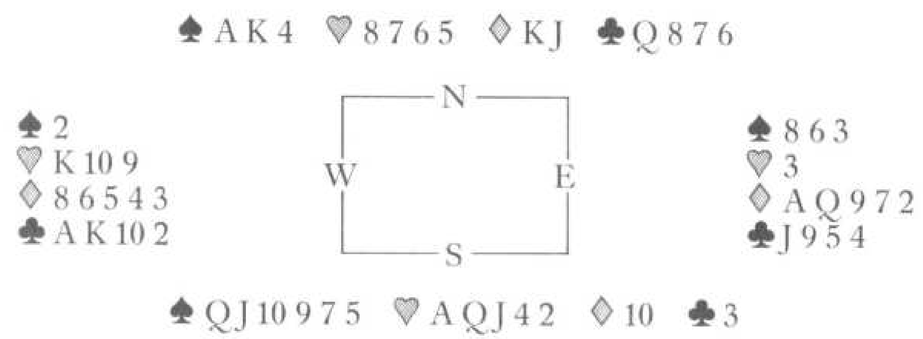
Contract: 3NT by South
Lead: ♢9

This is a thin game and South will need a little luck to bring in nine tricks. He wins the diamond lead with the ace (or ♢Q) and plays the ace and another club. With no club honours appearing it appears to be a guess between playing the ten and the queen – but he should play the queen. A third club establishes the suit. West will probably switch to a low heart. Declarer can make an overtrick if he goes up with dummy's ♡K.

This hand was played by John Pugh in the British European Championship Trials for Ostend, 1966. At the time his opponents were not pleased when he immediately called for dummy's ♣Q at trick three. When the clubs divided 3–3 the rest of the hand was easy, and Pugh finished up by making ten tricks. Mutterings of, 'Lucky club guess,' were quite audible. But of course it wasn't a *lucky* guess, as no doubt his opponents would have been the first to acknowledge had they thought about the problems a little longer. Pugh simply played the odds. If he had played dummy's ♣10 and found East with ♣Kx he would still have had to lose two tricks in the suit. On the other hand, the play of the ♣Q restricts the loss to one trick, not only when East holds Jxx but also when he holds ♣Jx.

56. MACK THE KNIFE

Game all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	Dbl	Rdbl	2♢
2♡	3♢	4♡	P
P	P		

Contract: 4♡ by South
Lead: ♣K and switch to ♠2

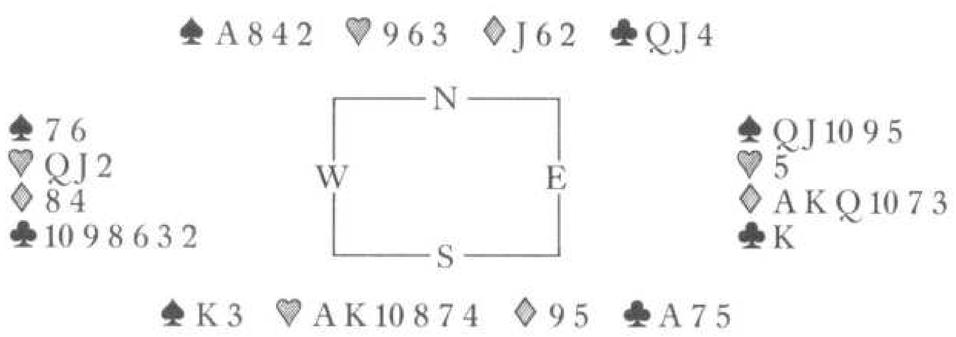
Declarer wins the spade switch in dummy and plays the ♣Q, throwing the ♢10 from his hand. He wins West's return and plays the ♡AQ. Again he wins whatever West plays, draws the last trump and cashes his winning spades.

This hand occurred in the 1969 World Championships in Rio de Janeiro (France *v* Italy). The contract was the same in both rooms but the Italian declarer, with no opposition bidding to guide him, went one down when he elected to play ♡A and then ♡Q after the spade switch at trick two.

In the other room South was Henri Svarc, representing France. The bidding had alerted him to the dangers of a spade ruff so he quite rightly decided that this was the moment to employ the Scissors Coup – and cut the enemy communications. With hindsight West would have led his singleton spade originally, and then not even Henri Svarc would have found an effective counter.

57. ALMOST EERIE

Game all; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	P	1♢	2♡
P	3♡	3♠	4♡
Dbl	P	P	P

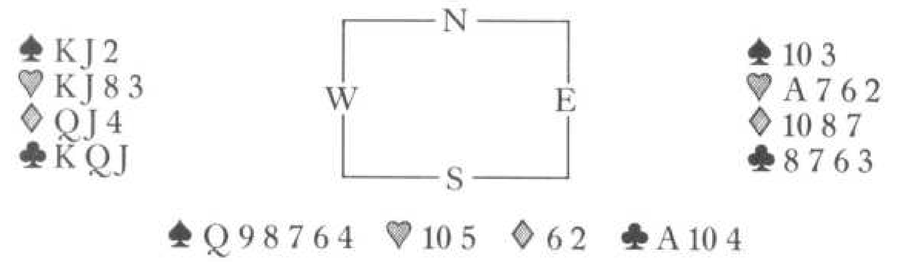
Contract: 4♡ doubled by South
Lead: ♢8

East takes two top diamonds and plays a third round – the ace. South ruffs with the ♡8 and West overruffs with the ♡J. West switches to the ♠7. Declarer wins with the ♠K and draws the remaining trumps. Declarer can now play a spade to the ace and ruff a spade, just to confirm the spade distribution, but whether he does this or not he must lay down the ♣A.

Terence Reese played this hand in the World Olympiad in New York 1964. At the critical stage, instead of playing the ♣A, he said 'I will have to concede a club unless the king is bare.' A little off-putting for his opponents, perhaps, but of course Reese knew the clubs were 6–1 and he had a shrewd idea that the king was singleton. East has turned up with seven red cards and five spades, leaving him with a lone club. But in any case it cannot possibly help declarer to finesse for that must be the one certain way of losing a trick in the suit – whatever the distribution.

58. A ROYAL SACRIFICE

Love all; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♢	P	1♠	1NT
P	P	2♠	P
P	P		

Contract: 2♠ by South
Lead: ♣K

Declarer wins the ♣A and plays three rounds of diamonds, ruffing the third round. The ♠Q follows, which forces West to cover. Now a diamond from dummy gives East a choice of plays: to ruff or discard. In either case South disposes of his club loser. If East ruffs South will subsequently lose two hearts, one club and one spade (that's five tricks). If East discards West must ruff and the same losers will be lost when South crashes the master spades together.

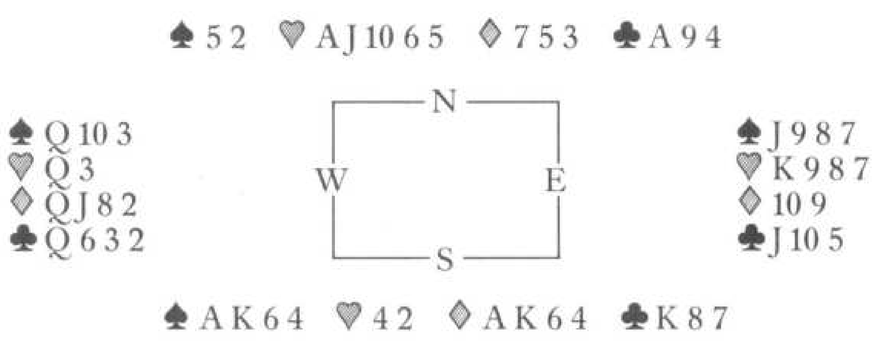
This hand occurred at rubber bridge where the declarer's technique and timing were exemplary. West was likely to have a strong balanced hand and the problem was to avoid losing two clubs, two hearts and two spades. Three rounds of diamonds was the first key play, since this created a lever to use against the opponent's trumps. The ♠Q at trick five, forcing West's king, was the second key play and then a master diamond from dummy was the final nail in the coffin.

Notes

No harm will come to the declarer should he decide to duck the first club.

59. LITTLE THINGS MEAN A LOT

Game all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	P	2♡	P
2NT	P	3NT	P
P	P		

Contract: 3NT by South
Lead: ♢2

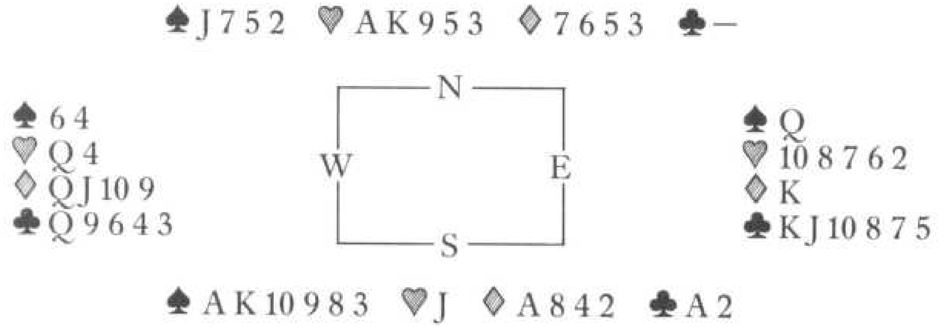
South should win the opening lead(♢A) and play a heart to dummy. West will probably play the ♡Q, but no matter what heart West plays dummy must play low. On regaining the lead a second heart is played, this time going up with ♡A. The ♡J now establishes two more heart winners. So declarer makes three hearts, two spades, two diamonds and two clubs.

It is almost certain that West's lead (♢2) is from a four-card suit (he would hardly lead the two from QJ1082) so declarer must win the first trick. In any case a switch to one of the black suits would be disastrous. Now he must direct his mind to the play of the heart suit. His problem is to establish three tricks in the suit and be able to enjoy them. If the hearts are 3–3 any reasonable method will suffice, but if they break 4–2 South's approach will have to be the correct one if he is to succeed.

If South makes the mistake of running the ♡10 at trick two, East will duck and now there is no way in which declarer can both establish and enjoy his fifth heart. Alternatively, West may go in with ♡Q on the first round, but declarer must resist the temptation to play dummy's ace.

60. SAFETY FIRST

Game all; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
P	1♠	P	4♠
P	6♠	P	P
P			

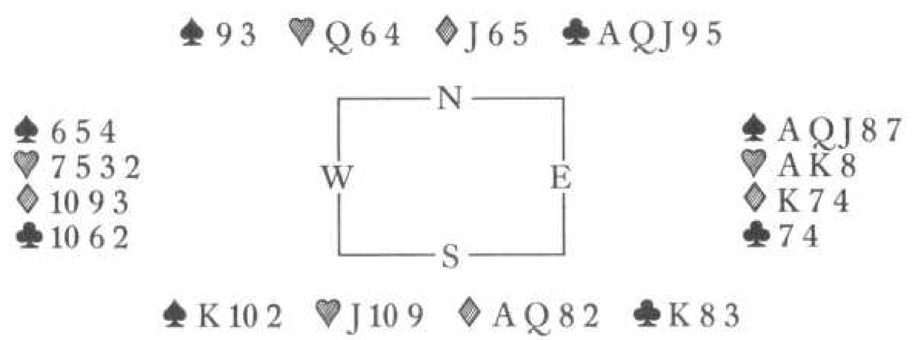
Contract: 6♠ by South
Lead: ♢Q

Declarer wins the first trick with ♢A and cashes ♠A. The ♡J is covered by ♡Q, dummy's ♡A winning the trick. A heart is ruffed in hand, then the ♠J is followed by a second heart ruff. When West shows out, declarer cashes ♣A, throwing a diamond from dummy, and ruffs a club. Now the ♡K is followed by dummy's last heart, South discarding two diamonds. East is on play and must concede a ruff and discard for declarer's twelfth trick.

When this hand occurred at the table South made his contract in an elegant but risky fashion. After one heart ruff he cashed ♣A and ruffed a club. Now he drew the last trump, remaining in dummy with ♠J, and played ♡5. When East played ♡7 he threw a diamond, leaving East the choice of conceding a ruff and discard or leading up to dummy's heart tenace. The flaw with this plan was that West might well have held a third heart in which case the contract would have failed.

61. TOO GOOD FOR COMFORT

Love all; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	P	1♠	P
P	2♣	Dbl	3NT
P	P	P	

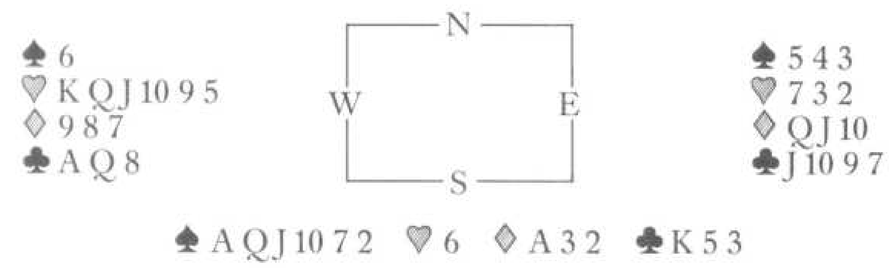
Contract: 3NT by South
Lead: ♠6

If East plays the ♠J on the first round South can take his ♠K (it won't matter if he ducks. East will probably continue with the ♠A and another but the same end position will arise). A club to dummy is followed by the ♢5, the finesse being successful. Now all the clubs are played and East has to discard. Dummy exits with a spade or a heart and East has to concede the last two diamonds to declarer's split tenace. Declarer makes five clubs, three diamonds and one spade.

This hand comes from an inter-counties team-of-four match. In one room the contract was three clubs by North just made. In the other room, where East and South were both fine players, the bidding was more aggressive. South was almost certain his side had insufficient points for three no trumps but he also knew that all the missing points would be sandwiched in the East hand. Acutely aware that these hands invariably play well, he was not content to bid less than game. East knew positively that his opponents could hold no more the 23 points between them, but still he didn't double. He knew he was *too* good. West, who only had a very minor role to play, tried to look like a man with an interest in diamonds when he played the ♢10 on the first round. But declarer was quite happy first to squeeze East out of some of his winners, and then end-play him.

62. NOT SO FAST

N–S Game; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	3♡	3♠	P
4♠	P	P	P

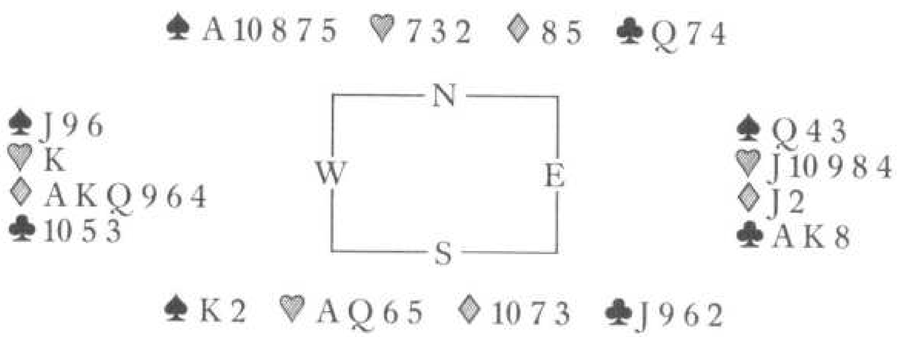
Contract: 4♠ by South
Lead: ♡K

Declarer should duck the opening lead! He wins the continuation, discarding a small diamond from his own hand. The ♠8 and ♠9 are followed by ♢A, ♢K and a diamond ruff. Dummy is re-entered with the ♠K and a club is discarded on dummy's winning diamond. A small club to the ♣K loses to ♣A but declarer has made his contract with six spades, three diamonds and one heart.

In a team-of-four match correct technique earned a lot of points on this hand when the contract and opening lead were duplicated in each room. The declarer in the first room won the ♡A, played two rounds of trumps and then three rounds of diamonds. East won and played ♣J. So that was – 100. In the other room declarer employed the right technique when he ducked the heart lead. Then he was able to discard a diamond on the ♡A and establish a third trick in diamonds without allowing East on play to threaten his ♣K.

63. GOD SAVE THE KING

Game all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
P	1♢	P	1♡
P	2♢	P	2NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

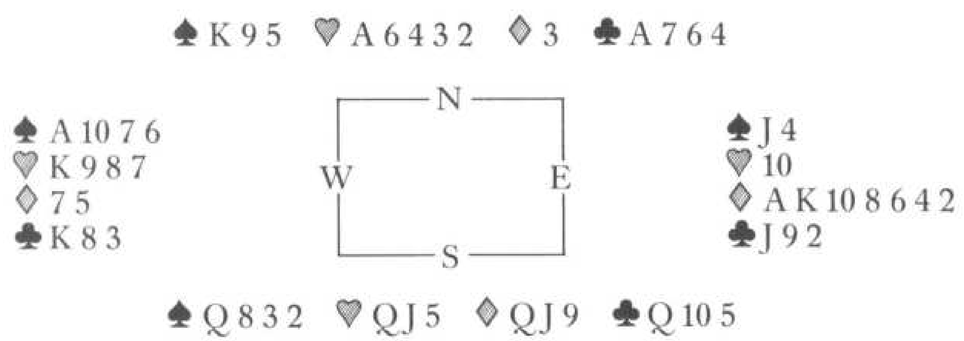
Contract: 3NT by East
Lead: ♣2

On the ♣2 dummy plays low and North's ♣Q is taken by declarer's ♣K. Declarer now plays a low heart towards dummy. South must win this trick and switch to the ♠*2*. North wins ♠A and returns a club to defeat the contract.

Some years ago London was invaded by those two brilliant Australian players Dick Cummings and Tim Seres. It was Seres who held the South hand in this deal and he was quick to appreciate the lie of the cards. It was essential to have a club lead through declarer. Also, it had to be assumed that East did not have the ♠A, for if he had, nine tricks would present no problem. Furthermore, it appeared that East had ♣AK and ♡J; with the ♠A as well he would probably have tried 3NT on the second round. So Seres played the ♠2, his partner won with the ♠A and the club return defeated the contract.

64. SWEET INNOCENCE

E–W game; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	P	3♢	P
3NT	P	P	P

Contract: 3NT by West
Lead: ♡3

West takes South's ♡J with the ♡K and – wisely – ducks a diamond to South. South cashes the ♡Q, West following with the ♡9 and North with the ♡2 while dummy discards the ♣2. South now plays a diamond to dummy which forces the declarer to cash all his diamond winners. On the last diamond, South parts with the ♠2 but West cannot make a safe discard. North just waits, poised for the kill.

This hand occurred in a modest game of family bridge thus it is hardly surprising that West's foolish falsecard of the ♡9 went by unnoticed. As North led the ♡3 and followed with the ♡2 he had shown a five-card suit, thus West must have four. If West can afford the nine it follows that he must also hold the 8 and 7. In these circumstances, assuming that West must have at least one black ace, it would be fatal to clear the heart suit, leaving declarer to cash six diamonds, a second heart and one black ace. For South to open up a black suit himself could be equally disastrous. But if South forces declarer to run his diamonds immediately . . . Well, this was where fate played a funny trick. South had intended to continue with the ♡5, but to her horror she saw that she had dropped the ♢J on the table! 'Oh, partner, I am so sorry. I have pulled the wrong card and given them the contract,' she cried in anguish. When the contract was defeated by one trick, South innocently repeated her plea for forgiveness, 'Of course we would have beaten it by more had I not pulled the wrong card.'

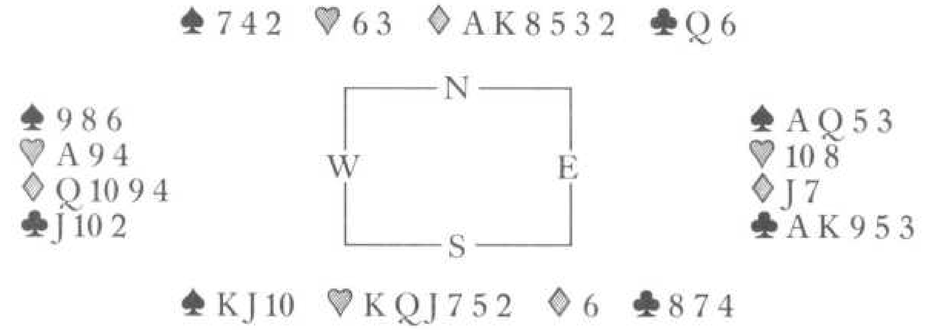
Notes

1. If South continues with a third heart at trick four, West will establish a second heart trick which, with six diamonds and one spade, will be enough.

2. If South switches to a low club declarer only has to duck and the ninth trick is established for him.
3. If South switches to a spade, declarer plays low from hand and the knave from dummy, leaving a simple finesse position.

65. WAS HIS JOURNEY NECESSARY?

Love all; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1♣	1♡	1NT	2♢
2♠	3♡	P	P
P			

Contract: 3♡ by South
Lead: ♣J

East takes two top clubs and then plays the ace and another spade. Declarer should finesse the ♠J, ruff a club in dummy and play a trump. West wins ♡A but declarer regains the lead, draws trumps and claims the remainder of the tricks.

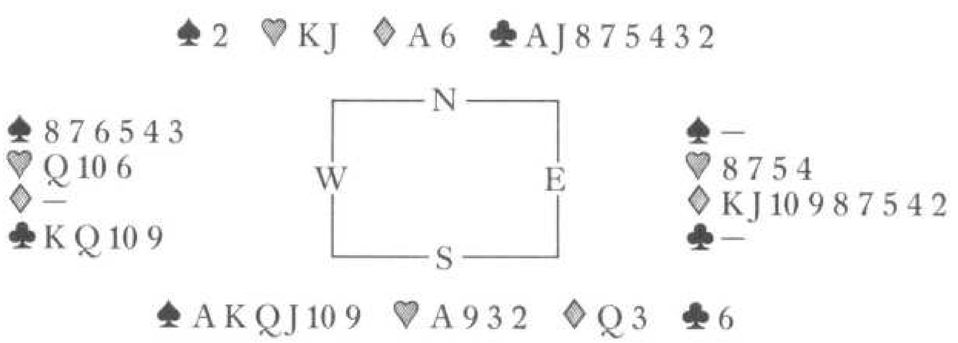
This was a hand played by former world champion, Nico Gardener. At trick four he visualised the danger of the trump promotion so took the 'unnecessary' spade finesse. Of course, just as Nico feared, his contract would have failed had he eschewed the finesse. However, partners do not always give these matters the same depth of thought when they are dummy, and this particular dummy was Mrs Pat Gardener, Nico's wife. With some irony she enquired if by taking the 'unnecessary' spade finesse he hoped to make an overtrick!

Notes

1. Declarer wins trick four with the ♠K, ruffs a club and then discards his spade loser on dummy's diamonds. Now, when trumps are played West wins and plays a third diamond for East to ruff and thus promote a trump trick for the defence.
2. If declarer puts up the ♠K at trick four and then plays trumps he will suffer five top losers.
3. If declarer takes the spade finesse but then discards his losing club on dummy's diamonds he will go down in the same way as in 1.

66. A SPECTACULAR PLUM

Love all; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♠	5♢	5♠	P
6♣	P	6♠	Dbl
P	P	P	

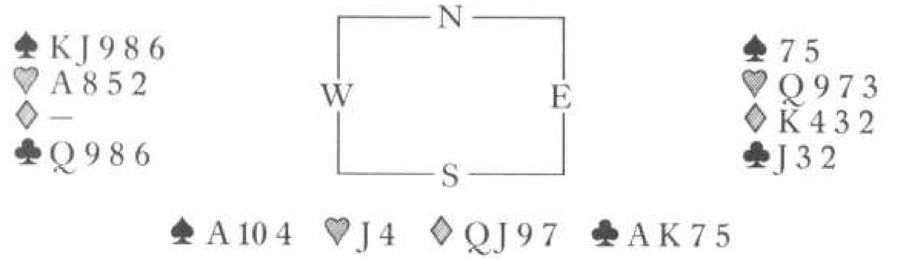
Contract: 6♠ doubled by South
Lead: ♣K

The ♣A wins the first trick, East discarding a diamond. Six rounds of spades follow, drawing all West's trumps. Dummy discards four small clubs and . . . the ♢A. The heart finesse wins and then on the ♡K West follows with the ♡Q. Now the ♢6 is led and won by East's ♢K, West discarding a club. East plays the ♡7 but South goes up with the ♡A, dropping West's ♡10, and making the ♡9 and ♢Q for his contract.

This hand was played by Adam Meredith, universally known as 'Plum'. Many fine judges reckon that Meredith was the best card player this country had ever had. Whether that is so or not there is no doubt that his dummy play on this hand was as brilliant as it was spectacular. Once East could not ruff the ♣A the hand was practically an open book: six spades, one club, four hearts (the finesse *had* to be right and the 10 *had* to come down) and one diamond make twelve tricks. But of course the snag is how do you return to hand when all the trumps are exhausted? 'Plum' soon found the answer, discarding the ♢A so that he could return to his winning hearts via the ♢Q. West did his best by dropping the ♡Q on the second round, but he was counted for three hearts so there was no way Meredith was going to insert the ♡9 when East played the suit.

67. TIMING TO PERFECTION

N–S game; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	P	P	1NT*
2♣†	3NT	P	P
P			

Contract: 3NT by South
Lead: ♠8

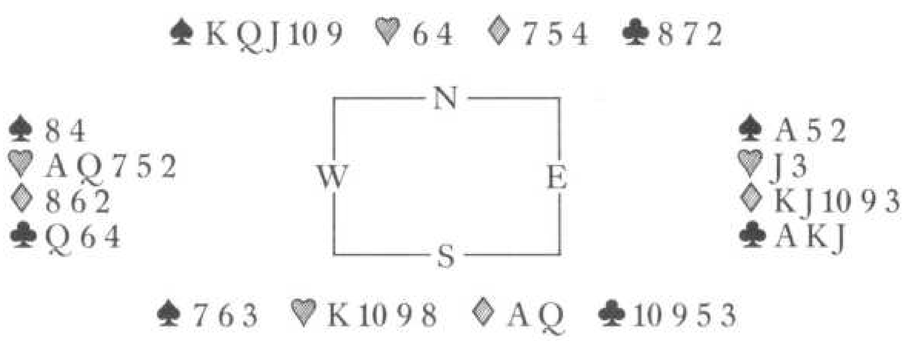
* 15–17 points
† Showing length in the majors

The ♠10 wins the first trick and declarer immediately plays a low heart towards dummy. When West ducks he goes up with the ♡K, returns to hand with a club and takes the diamond finesse. This loses but declarer now has nine tricks and the defence can take no more than four.

This hand was played by Paul Soloway in the 1984 World Team Olympiad, USA *v* Italy. Appreciating that, on the bidding, the diamond finesse was likely to be wrong, he conceived a plan whereby if he lost the second trick it would be to West, not East. West, of course, was not in a position to continue the spade attack whereas East was. Having got his heart trick safely in the bag, Solway returned to hand and took the diamond finesse. A brilliant piece of timing.

68. PANDORA'S BOX

Love all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
P	P	P	1♢
P	1♡	1♠	2NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Contract: 3NT by East
Lead: ♠7

Declarer wins the third round of spades with the ♠A and leads the ♣J, overtaken with dummy's ♣Q. Dummy plays the ♢8 which is run to South's . . . ACE! South switches to ♡10. Declarer wins in dummy with ♡A and takes the 'safe' diamond finesse. The defence now have five tricks, two spades, two diamonds and one heart.

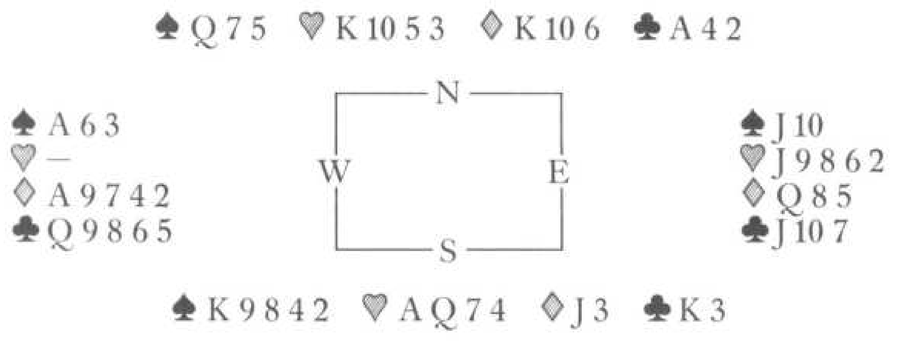
South on this hand was the famous Swedish player Einar Werner who, back in the forties and fifties, formed one of the most powerful partnerships in international bridge with Rudolph Koch. Realising that it would almost certainly be the end of the defence if he won the first round of diamonds with the ♢Q, Werner conceived this neat trap for the declarer. It was hardly surprising that the declarer failed to make his contract once Pandora's box had been opened up.

Notes

Once North had won two spade tricks he might have realised there was little point in continuing with spades when he had no outside entries. If he had found the heart switch declarer would have failed by two tricks.

69. THE COMMENTATOR'S CHUCK

Love all; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
P	1♠	P	2♣
P	2♡	P	4♡
P	P	P	

Contract: 4♡ by South
Lead: ♢A

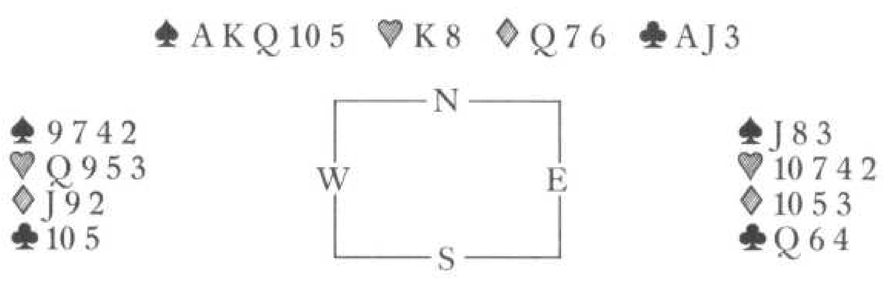
After the ♢A, West switches to a club (♣6) won by dummy's ♣A. The ♡3 to the ♡A is followed by the ♣K and a spade to dummy's ♠Q. A club ruff, the ♢K, a diamond ruff and the ♡Q follow. Declarer, who has lost only one trick, exits with a spade and it does not matter which opponent wins the spade. Eventually East will have to play into dummy's trump tenace.

This is a hand from the 1984 World Olympiad, women's series. In the first match of the round robin GB were drawn against the USA. In the closed room it may have appeared, superficially at least, that Nicola Smith (W) and Pat Davies (E) for Great Britain had conceded an unnecessary penalty when playing in 4♣ doubled by West for the loss of 300. When Sally Horton (S) and Sandra Landy (N) pressed on to 4♡ the learned commentary team predicted that Sally would be unable to fulfil her contract, the poor trump break being impossible to handle. However, Sally had other ideas and the gain for GB suddenly became apparent.

South to play, had lost only one trick to the ♢A. Sally Horton exited with a spade and it made no difference who won the trick. Eventually East has to play into dummy's heart tenace.

70. IN REVERSE GEAR

Game all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♣	P	2♠	P
3♢	P	4NT	P
5♡	P	5NT	P
6♡	P	7♣	P
P	P		

Contract: 7♣ by South
Lead: ♠2

Dummy wins the ♠A and cashes the ♠K and ♠Q, declarer throwing a diamond and a heart. The ♠10 is played next and when East refuses to ruff South discards another diamond. Dummy now runs the ♣J, East following with ♣4 and West ♣5. The ♣A and ♣K draw the outstanding trumps and declarer can claim the rest of the tricks.

The star performer on this hand was Leslie Dodds, former world champion. He was renowned for sometimes playing contracts 'upside down' – or so it might appear to the puritan – but when he did resort to an unusual line his judgement was invariably vindicated. Playing the spades immediately was designed to try and obtain more information before committing himself to tackling trumps. When East refuses to ruff the ♠10, allowing Dodds to obtain another discard, Dodds took the view that East probably held the ♣Q. Thus the ♣J from dummy solved all his problems.

Note

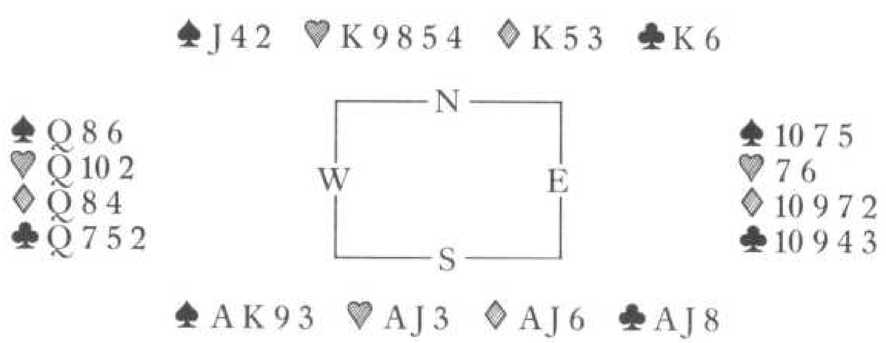
Dealing with the club suit in isolation, i.e. without any clear inferences from the bidding or play, it is correct to play low to the knave unless West produces the queen. This caters for all 3–2 breaks where West has the queen and also where West has the singleton queen. If East has the singleton queen the suit cannot be picked up without loss even when South plays the king first.

Once declarer decides that East is trying to protect a good trump holding by not trumping the fourth spade the technically correct way to tackle the

trump suit is to play the ♣A first in case West has the ♣Q singleton and East has ♣10, 6, 5, 4. However in practice it is best to immediately lead the ♣J as if East has the doubleton queen, he is unlikely to cover the ♣J with his queen unless he has the ♣10 as well. If the ♣J is covered with the ♣Q it may be best, if East is an expert, to play the ♣A on the next trick, assuming East has the ♣10 and hoping he started with ♣Q, 10 doubleton.

71. A HAREM PERHAPS?

Game all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2NT	P	4NT	P
6NT	P	P	P

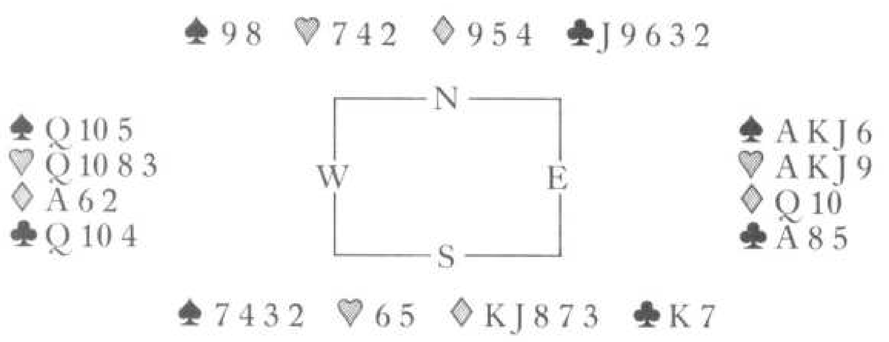
Contract: 6NT by South
Lead: ♣2

The ♣J wins the first trick. Declarer now plays ♡3 to ♡K and takes a losing heart finesse. West exits safely with a club to dummy's ♣K. The ♠A, ♡A, ♠K and ♣A are all cashed and then dummy is entered with the ♢K to run the two remaining hearts. On the ♣A dummy throws a diamond and on the ♡A East throws a club. On the two good hearts East throws ♠10 and ♢7, South discards his two spades and West parts with ♣Q and ♢8. The ♢5 is led and declarer plays the ♢A making his contract.

Harold Franklin, the British international and world famous tournament director, earned himself an Oscar on this hand with a brilliant combination of technique and psychology. Notice how the ♠AK were cashed (Vienna Coup), an essential unblocking play in preparation for the end-game. When the ♢5 was led from dummy the finesse would have been the winning play had East held ♢Q. But Franklin, reconstructing the hand on this basis, realised that if East held the ♢Q West's hand would be ♠Qxx; ♡Qxx; ♢10xx; ♣Qxxx. West was a good player and Franklin was prepared to bet that with that hand West would have opted for the comparatively safe lead of a diamond. The conclusion, therefore, was that West started life with *all* the queens and thus *had* to lead from one of his harem. Without further ado Franklin played the ♢A, dropping the ♢Q and so getting home in an exciting contract.

72. NEWS FLASH

E–W game; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	P	2NT	P
4♣*	P	4NT†	P
6NT	P	P	P

Contract: 6NT by East
Lead: ♠2

* Gerber asking for aces
† Three aces

Declarer cashes four rounds of spades, dummy discarding ♢2 and North ♣2 and ♢4. East now cashes the ♣A followed by four rounds of hearts. On the ♣A South should throw the ♣K, so as not to be end-played in diamonds. Now North can take the club trick and play a diamond through declarer's ♢Q10, or simply cash an additional club winner.

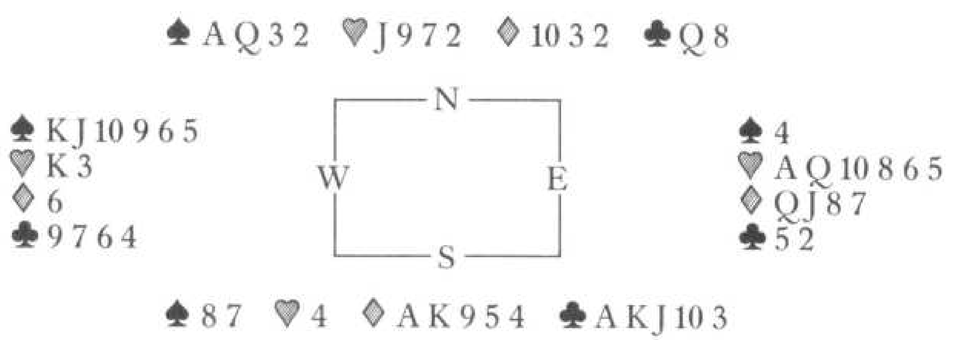
This hand occurred in the 1969 World Championships in Rio de Janeiro. Italy *v* China. In one room Avarelli (W) and Belladonna (E) reached the slightly superior contract of 6♡, played by Belladonna. Against this contract the defence, Tai (N) and P. Huang (S) for China, were helpless. Had South parted with the ♣K Belladonna would have discarded a club from dummy – losing just one diamond.

In the other room China was represented by F. Huang (W) and C.E. Shen (E), while D'Alelio (N) and Pabis-Ticci (S) held the fort for Italy. Against 6NT Pabis-Ticci had a great opportunity to make the headlines and disembarrass himself of the ♣K, especially when the declarer played a third heart. But eventually Shen executed the same throw-in play that Belladonna had enjoyed in his room . . . so there was no swing on the board.

Note
When declarer cashed the ♣A he practically made a public annoucement that he did not hold ♣J.

73. WITH A LITTLE HELP . . .

Love all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♢	2♠*	2NT	3♡
4♣	P	4♢	P
5♣†	P	P	P

Contract: 5♣ by South
Lead: ♡K

* Weak jump overcall
† When North passed 5♣ perhaps he visualised four diamonds and five clubs. Anyway, that is what happened.

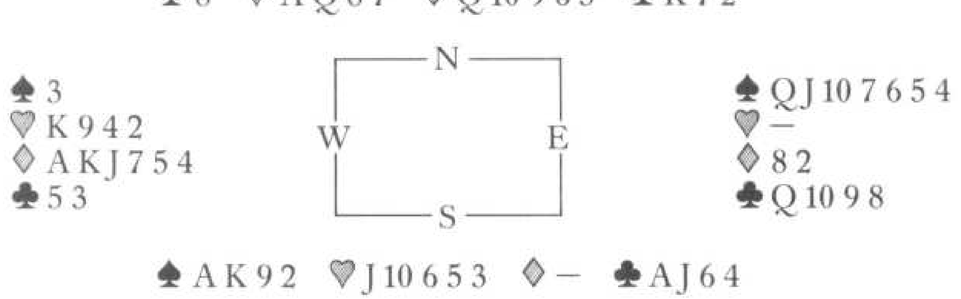
The heart continuation is ruffed by South. Trumps are drawn, dummy discarding ♠2 and ♡9 (now nobody has any trumps) and dummy is entered via the spade finesse. (8, 9, Q, 4). The ♢10 is covered by the ♢J and ♢A. South plays ♠7, covered by West's ♠10 and . . . West is allowed to hold the trick (East throws ♡Q). The forced spade continuation is won by dummy's ♠A and East is squeezed. Say he throws ♢7. Now the diamond finesse leaves declarer's hand high.

This hand occurred many many years ago but it is a wonderful illustration of superb card skill by former world champion Nico Gardener. Playing in the slightly strange contract of 5♣, Nico had to contend with the force at trick two and the 4–2 division of trumps. However, when the ♢10 was covered and West followed with the ♢6 the count was complete. West's jump overcall marked him with six spades and he had already shown two hearts, one diamond and four clubs. Gardener knew he could make the contract if he could bring pressure to bear on East – and who better to do that than West?! Thus when, at trick nine, West covered the ♠7 with ♠10 Nico gratefully allowed him to hold the trick. East parted with the ♡Q on this round, but when spades were continued he could no longer discard safely.

Of course, if West refuses to cover the ♠7 . . . declarer cannot succeed. But then that would be another story.

74. CONFIDENCE IN PARTNER

N–S game; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
4♠	Dbl	P	5♠
P	6♡	Dbl	Rdbl
P	P	P	

Contract: 6♡ redoubled by South
Lead: ♢K

The opening diamond lead is ruffed and the ♡J run successfully, East discarding a spade. A small heart is played to dummy's ♡8, East throwing a second spade. The ♢Q is played from dummy (East might have held the ♢J), declarer throwing a spade. West exits with a spade to South's ♠A. A small heart to the ♡Q is followed by a third diamond ruffed with declarer's last trump. Dummy is re-entered with a club to the king, ♡A is cashed, drawing the last trump, and East is squeezed.

Nico Gardener, in the South seat, again features as the star player on this hand. East left nothing unbid when he ventured four spades, even though it was favourable vulnerability, and North certainly showed his confidence when he pushed Gardener to six hearts and then, for good measure, redoubled.

At the point when Gardener played the ♢Q from dummy (East might have held Jx), and threw a spade, the count was almost certain. East, who had petered in diamonds, was marked with seven spades, two diamonds and four clubs. The club finesse had to be right to offer any chance and, with West holding ten cards in the red-suits, a black-suit squeeze had to be high on the agenda. Throwing a spade on the ♢Q was the safe way to rectify the count.

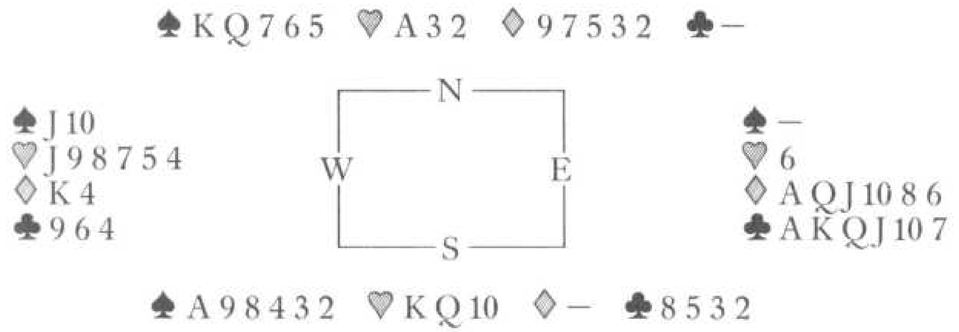
74. Confidence in Partner *continued*

Notes

1. Declarer must throw a spade on the ♦Q, not a club.
2. If instead declarer trumps the ♦Q and then overtakes his last trump with the ♥Q and leads the ♥A, East is squeezed. If he discards a spade then declarer discards a club and can set up a trick for his last spade. If he discards a club then declarer discards a spade and can make four club tricks. It is rare for a squeeze to operate while declarer still has a trick to lose.

75. ANYTHING YOU CAN DO . . .

Love all; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
2♦	2♠	P	4♠
5♣	5♠	6♣	6♠
7♣	Dbl	P	7♠
Dbl	P	P	P

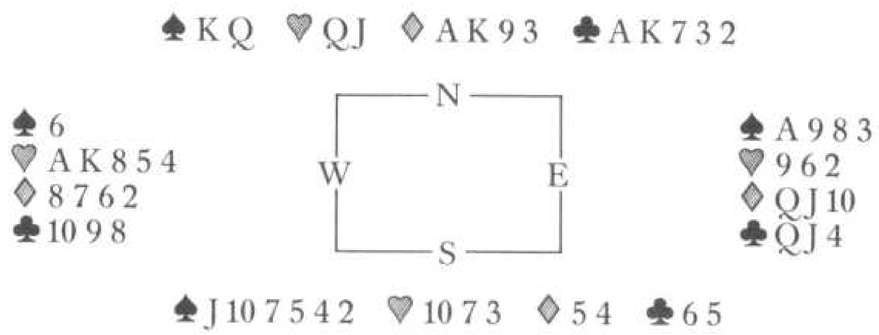
Contract: 7♠ doubled by South
Lead: ♦K

The ♦K is ruffed and a low spade to ♠K confirms the bad break; it also scotches any plans declarer may well have favoured to claim his contract on a cross-ruff. Three rounds of hearts are played *finishing in dummy*. The ♠Q is played and South awaits East's pleasure. If East discards a diamond, South follows with a low spade and sets up a long diamond in dummy. If East discards a club the ♠Q is overtaken and a long club is set up in declarer's hand.

This is the last of the fine plays by Nico Gardener as declarer. It happened at rubber bridge at the RAC many years ago. The bidding was fairly typical – even today – of a hand rich in distribution that might belong to either side.

76. A GAME TWO CAN PLAY

Game all; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
2♣	P	2♢	P
2NT	P	4♠	P
P	P		

Contract: 4♠ by South
Lead: ♡K

On the ♡K East plays ♡9 and on the ♡A which follows he completes the peter with ♡2. West continues with ♡5 which dummy ruffs, East following with ♡6! Placing East with ♠A9xx, which would account for his shenanigans in hearts, South continues with ♢AK and a ruff followed by ♣A and the ♢9. East ruffs this good diamond with ♠9 and South overruffs with ♠10. The ♣K and the club ruff follow. The ♠5 is played to the king and ace and East's remaining spades are trapped by declarer's tenace.

This hand was played by Ewart Kempson way back in the late forties. Kempson was a great advocate of natural bidding and in those days was one of the leading authorities on the game. The bidding sequence has been amended to bring it somewhere near present day standards, but there is certainly no need to alter the order of play. This was a high class game and East, realising the importance of his trump holding, sought to mislead declarer as to the number of hearts he held. When East followed to the third round of hearts Kempson immediately placed him with ♠A9xx and set about reducing his trumps so that he could coup East in the end-game. Considering how little was written about card play in those days this hand surely confirms what a wonderfully instinctive and alert player Ewart Kempson must have been. East on this hand was Maurice Ellenger, another famous player of that era. He could have refrained from ruffing the ♢9 at trick eight but that would have made little difference. Kemson still ruffs and continues his trump reduction plan. A second club to dummy and a further club ruff (overruffing East) reduces his trumps to a parity with East. Now a trump to the king is the final nail in East's coffin.

Notes

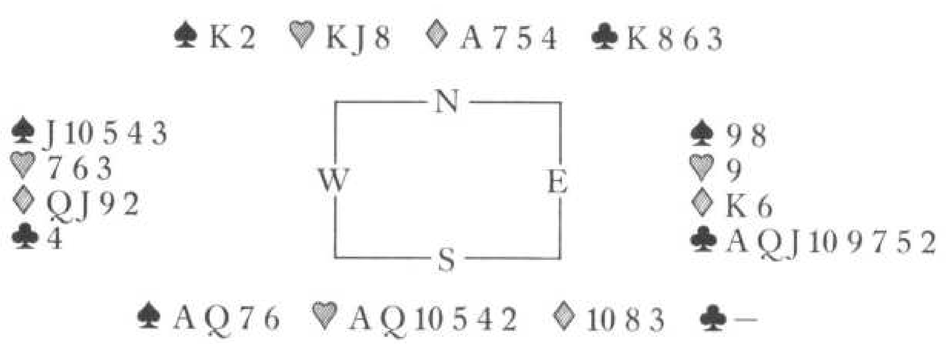
It is clearly inferior to try to ruff clubs rather than diamonds but it is still possible (if rather lucky) to make the contract if declarer plays ♣AK and ruffs a club. He plays a diamond to dummy's ace and another club.

(a) If East discards a diamond, declarer ruffs with the ♠7 and plays a diamond to dummy's ♢K. A diamond is led from dummy and East must play the ♠8. Declarer overruffs and leads a spade to the king. Assuming East wins with the ♠A he must lead from ♠9, 3 into declarer's ♠J, 5.

(b) If East ruffs with the ♠8, declarer overruffs, plays a diamond to dummy's ♢K and can ruff a diamond with a small trump. He then leads a trump to dummy's king and East is again endplayed.

77. MAXIMUM MARX

Game all; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
5♣	5♡	P	6♡
P	P	P	

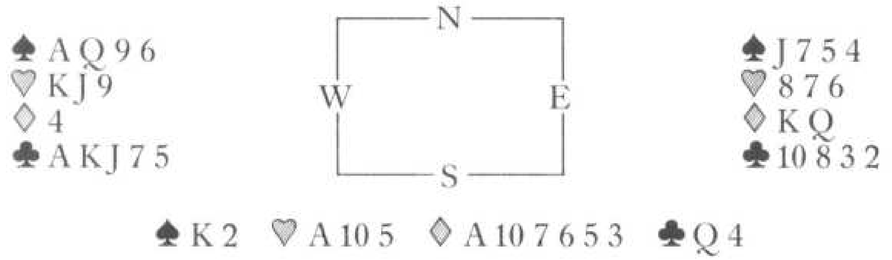
Contract: 6♡ by South
Lead: ♣4

On the ♣4 dummy plays ♣8, East ♣9 and declarer ruffs with ♡2. A small heart is led to dummy's ♡J (noting the fall of ♡9) and a second club is ruffed. A diamond is ducked to East, to rectify the count, and East returns a diamond won by dummy's ♢A. A third club is ruffed with ♡Q, West discarding ♢J. A heart is then led to dummy's ♡K, the ♣K is played from dummy and ruffed with ♡A but West is in trouble. He delays the evil hour by underruffing. Dummy is entered with ♠K and the ♡8 is cashed, South discarding ♢10. Now West is squeezed and there is no escape.

This hand was played by Jack Marx, former European Champion and one of the main architects of the Acol system. Realising that he would need to play for a dummy reversal and squeeze he was heartened to see the ♡9 fall in the first round of trumps. This meant that he had adequate entries to dummy to achieve the ending he required.

78. THE ROAD TO HELL

Game all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♢	Dbl	2♢	P
P	2♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Contract: 4♠ by West
Lead: ♢2

South wins the ♢A and switches to the ♡5. West plays ♡K and North ♡3. West cashes ♣AK, North following with ♣9 and ♣6, and exits with ♡9 on which North completes the peter with ♡2. South wins with ♡A, not ♡10, and plays his last heart, the ten. North wins the third round of hearts with ♡Q and plays the thirteenth heart which South overruffs with ♠K to promote his partner's ♠10, the setting trick.

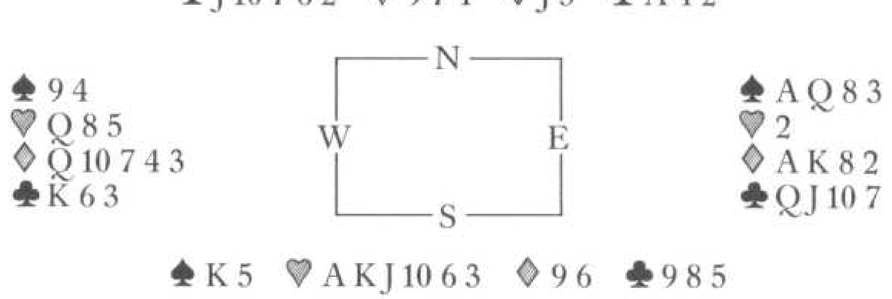
When this hand occurred at rubber bridge South was Kenneth Konstam, former world champion. On the second round of hearts Konstam was careful to win the ♡9 with ♡A and then return the ♡10. Unfortunately, however, his partner had read somewhere that it was bad bridge to concede a ruff and discard, and the diamond return spoilt what would have been a most unusual defence.

Notes

1. If South plays anything but a heart at trick two declarer can make his contract (all he needs is an entry to dummy). The ♡A and another, as it happens, work as well as a small one.
2. If North hops up with the ♡Q on the second round the defensive timing is now wrong and declarer will succeed.

79. MATCHPOINTITIS

Love all; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	P	1♠	2♡
P	P	Dbl	P
P	P		

Contract: 2♡ doubled by South
Lead: ♠9

East wins the first trick with ♠A and returns a spade to South's ♠K. South plays ♡10 at trick three, but West wins with ♡Q and plays ♣3 to dummy's ♣A. A spade is ruffed high and now a small trump to dummy's ♡7 allows a second spade to be ruffed high. Dummy is entered with ♡9 to draw the last trump and enjoy the fifth spade. So declarer makes five hearts, two spades and one club.

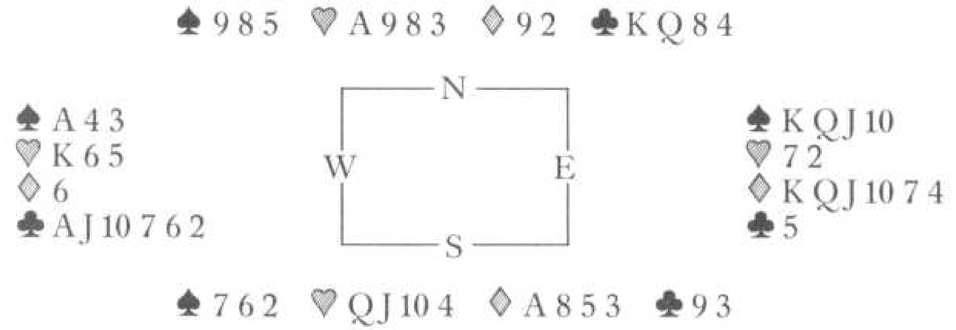
This hand was played by Terence Reese, perhaps the most famous British player of all time, in the National Pairs Championship back in the fifties. East's choice of opening bid and West's final pass seem to border on the eccentric, and the fact that this was a match-pointed pairs event hardly provides sufficient justification for such bizarre decisions. Nevertheless the East-West pair were two of the leading players of the day and Reese certainly had to play a skilful game to land the bacon.

East returned a spade at trick two hoping his partner could ruff. The first key move came when Reese played the ♡10 at trick three. Although West was too good a player to be caught by this ploy, Reese was now firmly in command. All he had to do was establish the fifth spade and there were just sufficient entries to dummy as long as the trump finesse was utilised.

As so often happens, the eccentric manoeuvres by East-West in their quest for a top rebounded badly when a skilful dummy player took full advantage of their poor judgement.

80. DUCK OR NO DINNER

Love all; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1♢	P	2♣	P
2♢	P	2NT	P
3♠	P	4♠	P
P	P		

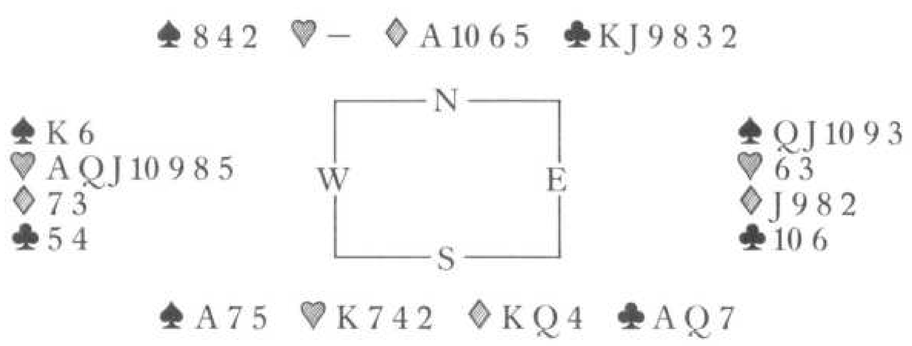
Contract: 4♠ by East
Lead: ♡Q

Declarer ruffs the third round of hearts with ♠10 and leads the ♢K which South must duck! The ♢Q follows and South must duck again. The third round of diamonds (South ducks again) is ruffed by North who returns a heart (any other return and declarer would simply ruff a diamond high and draw trumps). Now, no matter how declarer may twist and turn, there is no way he can avoid the loss of one more trump trick.

This hand was defended by Terence Reese (S) and Boris Schapiro (N), one of the strongest partnerships in the world. The final contract of 4♠ gave declarer by far his best chance of landing game. Indeed, had it not been for Reese's brilliant duck of the ♢K declarer would have got home in comfort. Note, too, Schapiro's heart continuation when he was in with his diamond ruff. This play was made in the knowledge that a ruff and discard would be of no benefit to declarer but it would weaken his trump holding.

81. A STERN GOES AHEAD

Love all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♣	2♡	3♡	3♠
3NT	4♡	6♣	P
P	P		

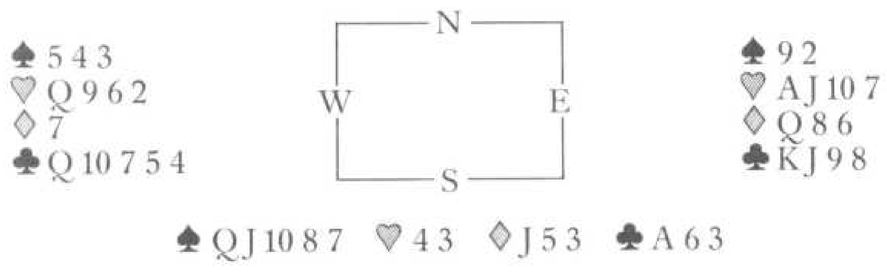
Contract: 6♣ by South
Lead: ♣5

South wins the trump lead in his own hand and ruffs a heart in dummy. A second trump is won in hand and a second heart ruff taken in dummy. Then a diamond to the ♢K and a third heart ruff and a diamond to the ♢Q and declarer ruffs his last heart in dummy with dummy's last trump. A spade is led from dummy and ducked by declarer. It makes no difference whether East wins this trick and continues spades, or whether West wins and returns a spade or a heart. It all adds up to the same thing, East is going to be squeezed in spades and diamonds. Say East wins and continues a spade, declarer plays ♠A and follows with ♣7. Dummy throws the ♠8 and East can retire.

This hand occurred some forty years ago and features that great character, the one and only Dr Paul Stern. If the bidding looks slightly off-key in places there was certainly nothing wrong with the Herr Doktor's dummy play. Superficially, there are only ten tricks on top, eleven if the diamonds break. But the tally improves if declarer takes four heart ruffs in the dummy (playing a dummy reversal). Now the total is eleven, and twelve if the diamonds break. But Stern realised that if the diamonds weren't breaking then there was every prospect of a squeeze.

82. MORE WAYS THAN TWO

Game all; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♢	P	1♠	P
2♡	P	3♢	P
3♠	P	4♠	P
P	P		

Contract: 4♠ by South
Lead: ♣5

When East plays the ♣K declarer must duck. East has no good continuation but suppose he returns a trump. Dummy wins and trumps are drawn. Now the ♢J is run to East's ♢Q, but the contract is safe. The defence can take no more than one club, one diamond and one heart.

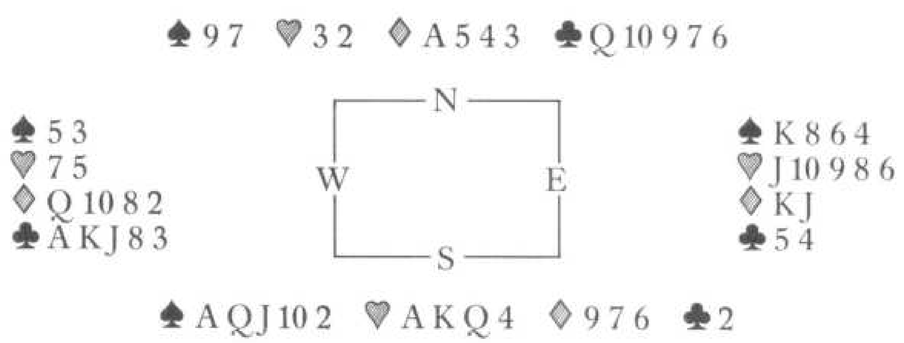
Declarer has to try to avoid the possibility of the defence making two hearts, one diamond and one club. If he wins the club, takes a club ruff, draws trumps and then plays on diamonds, East will win the ♢Q, put his partner in with a club and then defeat the contract when he collects two tricks in hearts. Alternatively, if the first trick is won with the ♣A and the diamond finesse taken immediately, East can give his partner a ruff, cash two hearts and then give his partner a second ruff. By ducking the club at trick one the hand does not become completely watertight, but the chances of success are greatly increased.

Notes

A slightly inferior method which will prove successful on this hand is to win the club lead with the ♣A, ruff a club with the ♠A, play the ♠6 to ♠Q and ruff a club with ♠K. Declarer now needs to return to his hand to draw trumps and perhaps the best method is to lead the ♡K. East wins but cannot prevent declarer from drawing trumps. If he leads a heart to West's ♡Q and West leads his singleton diamond declarer will, of course, play the ♢A from dummy and return to his hand with a heart ruff to draw trumps.

83. NUMBERS DON'T MATTER

N–S game; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	2♣	Dbl	P
2♡	P	2♠	P
3♠	P	4♠	P
P	P		

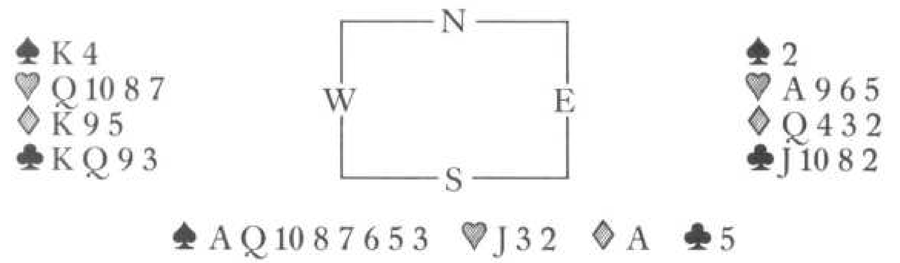
Contract: 4♠ by South
Lead: ♣K

West switches to a diamond at trick two, dummy's ♢A winning the trick. Declarer now ruffs a club, cashes ♡AK and ruffs a heart in dummy, West throwing a club. A second club is ruffed in hand and the remaining heart ruffed in dummy. A third club is ruffed and declarer only has to exit with a diamond and wait for his ♠AQ. He makes five spades, two hearts, two heart ruffs and one diamond.

This is one of the many finely played hands by World Champion, Giorgio Belladonna. The bidding has been amended slightly to get somewhere near an Acol sequence. Deciding that if East held the ♠K the contract might well be made regardless of the number of spades East held, Belladonna ruffed clubs at every available opportunity. To achieve his purpose he even had to ruff his master heart, the queen; but this was essential to gain another entry to dummy to reduce his trumps to the AQ precisely.

84. SAFETY PLAY SUPREME

Game all; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
P	P	4♠	P
P	P		

Contract: 4♠ by South
Lead: ♢5

Declarer crosses to dummy at trick two with the ♣A and plays the ♡*4*. West can win this trick cheaply with the ♡Q but the contract is now safe. Either declarer obtains a heart ruff or the spade suit is played for no loss.

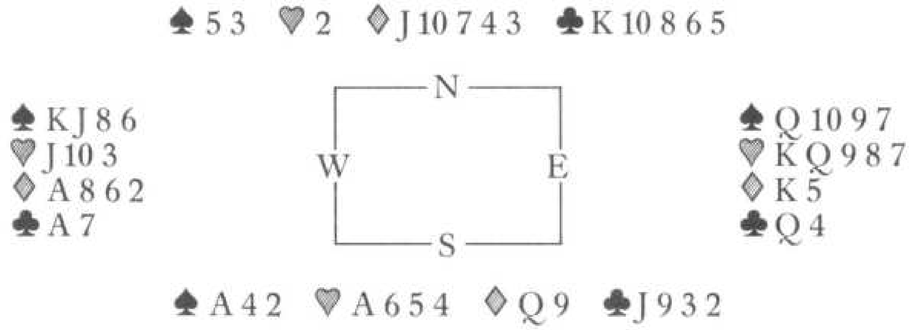
This is one of the most famous and best documented hands played by the great Giorgio Belladonna. Hardly pausing to take stock he saw the perfect safety play – a low heart from dummy towards the knave. If East wins with the ♡Q, declarer has to make a heart trick. If West wins with the ♡Q he cannot attack the trumps to advantage, so declarer can obtain a heart ruff.

Notes

1. Declarer might play a heart towards the king. East wins and returns a trump. Now declarer must lose one spade and three hearts.
2. Declarer might bank on the spade finesse being right, or the king falling singleton. No luck on either count.

85. NOT AT ONCE, DARLING, LATER

Game all; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♢	P	1♡	P
1♠	P	4♠	P
P	P		

Contract: 4♠ by West
Lead: ♡2

South should win the first trick with ♡A and return the ♣2. North wins this trick with ♣K and continues the suit. The ♢K wins trick four and a crafty ♠10 is led from dummy. However, South leaps on this and plays a heart to defeat the contract.

Played in a mixed pairs event this hand caused a certain amount of anguish at several tables. The best lead is the singelton heart, but it is not right for South to give his partner his ruff – not yet. He must plan further ahead than trick two. The ♠A is a sure entry card and it is likely that North has two trumps so South must look for the setting trick first. With this in mind the ♣2, at trick two, stands out like the proverbial sore thumb. At several tables where the defence had gone ♡A and heart ruff (contract made) the conversation went something like this:

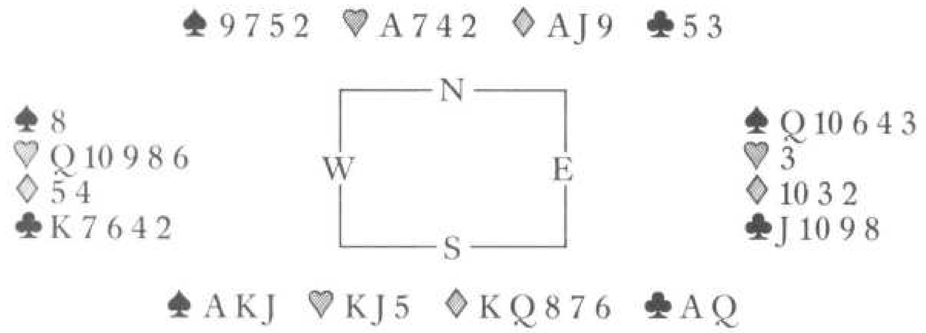
'Why didn't you switch to a club?'

'But you led a singleton, I thought you wanted a ruff.'

'I did, I did, but not at once, darling, later.'

86. CERTAIN TO FALL

Game all; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
P	2♣	P	2NT
P	3♢	P	4♢
P	4♠	P	6♢
P	P	P	

Contract: 6♢ by South
Lead: ♠8

Declarer wins the first trick with ♠J and draws trumps ending in dummy. The heart finesse loses to West's ♡Q and a heart is returned, East showing out. The ♠A is cashed and West shows out. The ♠K and two more diamonds are cashed. On the last diamond West must throw the ♣7 otherwise dummy's ♡7 becomes good. Dummy throws the small heart (it has done its job) and East – at this moment still in comfort – throws the ♠10. But then the ♡5 to dummy's ♡A forces East to part with a club. Now declarer plays a club to his ♣A certain that the king will fall, no matter which opponent holds it.

The player to star on this hand was Pietro Forquet, Italian World Champion. Playing in a European Championship he arrived in 6♢. The bidding sequence was rather different to the one given here but it is the play that matters (incidentally, 6NT would be a perfectly reasonable alternative and, in fact, is the likely contract playing Acol. In 6NT the play would follow a similar path to the one chosen for 6♢).

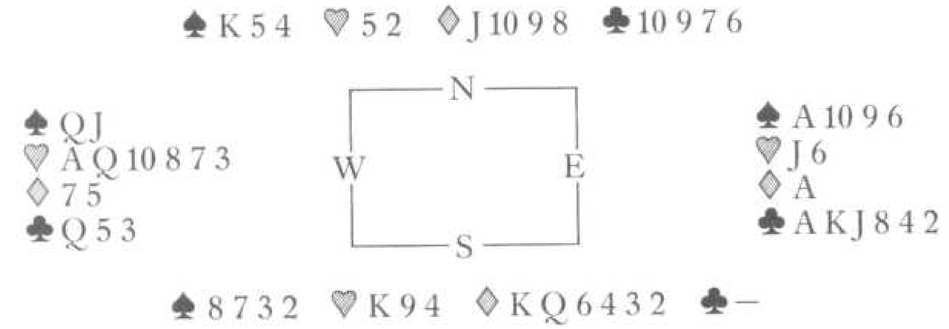
When the heart finesse lost and a heart was returned, East showing out, and then on the ♠A West showed out, Forquet was ready to claim his contract. It really did not matter who held the ♣K as the contract was 'cold' on an automatic non-simultaneous double squeeze.

Notes

1. Declarer can also succeed by winning the opening spade lead, playing two rounds of trumps, perhaps the ♠A (in case West started with two spades) and playing ♣A followed by ♣Q. West must win and either leads a club to give a ruff and discard or leads a heart to give declarer a trick with ♡J. This

method is certainly inferior to the double squeeze, outlined above.
2. Declarer might draw trumps finishing in his own hand. Now if he plays a heart to the ♡A the communications for a squeeze are destroyed.

E–W + 60; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1♣	P	1♡	P
1♠	P	2♡	P
3♡	P	4♡	P
5NT*	P	6♡†	P
P	P		

Contract: 6♡ by West
Lead: ♢J

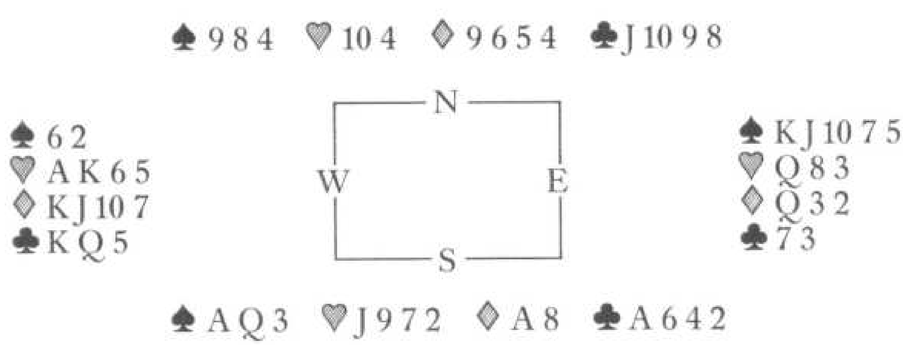
* Grand Slam Force
† Step response showing two of the top three honours.

At trick two declarer plays ♡6 from dummy. South should contribute the king. Declarer may place North with ♡9xxx, return to dummy with ♡J and then attempt to re-enter his hand with a club. Now South ruffs and cashes the ♢K.

From the bidding it is clear that West has a six-card heart suit headed by the AQ. Furthermore, South knows that any black-suit finesse is sure to succeed. The only hope seems to lie in diverting West from his probable intention of ruffing a diamond in dummy. South was Benito Garozzo, playing high-stake rubber bridge in Rome. At trick two he nonchalantly followed with the ♡K! West greedily, or perhaps carelessly, accepted the bait and returned a heart to dummy's knave, but when he attempted to re-enter his hand with the ♣Q Garozzo, ruffed and cashed a winning diamond. Full marks to Benito for his enterprise.

88. THE COLDITZ COUP

Game all; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♡	P	1♠	P
2NT	P	3NT	P
P	P		

Contract: 3NT by West
Lead: ♣J

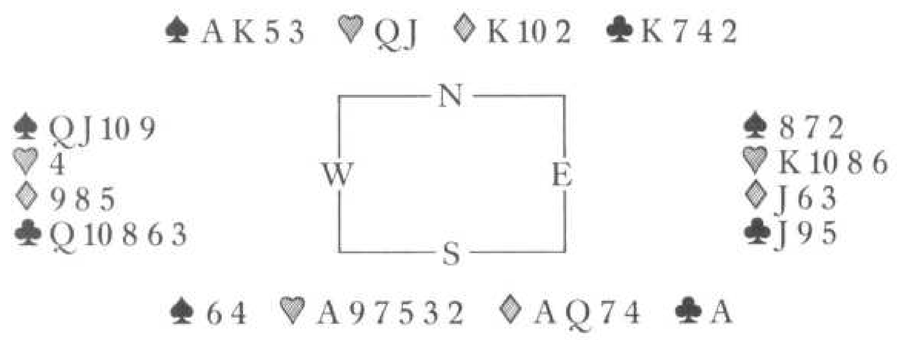
Declarer wins the opening lead with ♣Q and plays the ♢K and a diamond to South's ♢A (It doesn't matter if South ducks one round of diamonds.) South should now play *a low club*. West wins with ♣K and cashes three diamond winners. On the last diamond dummy throws a spade and South . . . ? He throws the ♣A! Now, whether declarer cashes his hearts hoping for a 3–3 break or tries for a spade trick, or throws South on play, the defence are always one move ahead and the contract must fail.

South in this hand was the famous Swiss player Jean Besse. He took a long time before playing to trick three. He appreciated that he would have some awkward discards when West cashed his diamond winners. The ♠3 would be easy, but then what? Throw his last club, unguard the hearts or part with the ♠Q? An unenviable choice, but Besse found an elegant solution. Return a low club at trick three and then on the fourth diamond he would be able to spare his ♣A.

At the other table, defending against the same contract with the same opening lead, South did not see the dangers in time.

89. EXCESS NUMBERS

N–S game; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♣	P	1♡	P
1♠	P	2♢	P
3NT	P	5♡	P
6♡	P	P	P

Contract: 6♡ by South
Lead: ♠Q

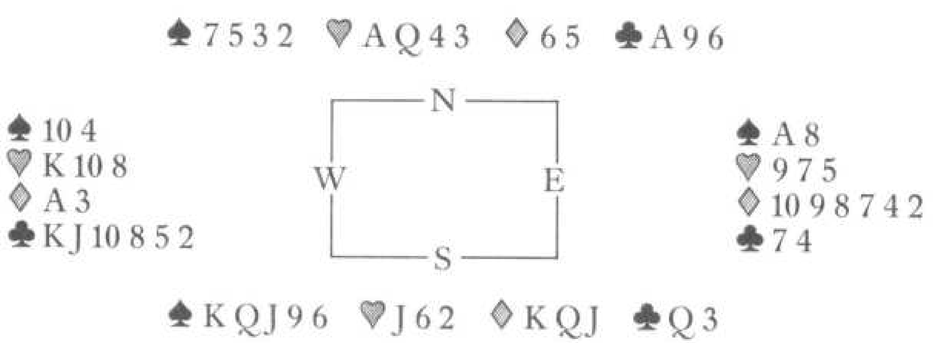
Declarer wins with the ♠A and leads a club to the ♣A. He then plays a low heart to dummy's ♡Q which holds. The ♣K discarding the ♢4 is followed by a club ruff and a low heart to dummy's ♡J which loses to the ♡K. A spade is returned, won in dummy with the ♠K and a spade is ruffed. Three rounds of diamonds are played ending in dummy and declarer is now poised in dummy at trick twelve with ♡A9 over East's ♡10 8.

Notes

1. At trick eight declarer must ruff a spade. If he tries to ruff a club East will discard a diamond and when declarer tries to enter dummy with the third round of diamonds it will be ruffed.
2. The lead of the ♡Q at trick two (which East will correctly duck) effectively wastes an entry to dummy. If declarer, on learning of the 4–1 trump split, tries to recover by finessing dummy's ♢10, he will be unlucky.

90. DISCARDING TROUBLE

Game all; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
P	P	1♠	2♣
3♠	P	4♠	P
P	P		

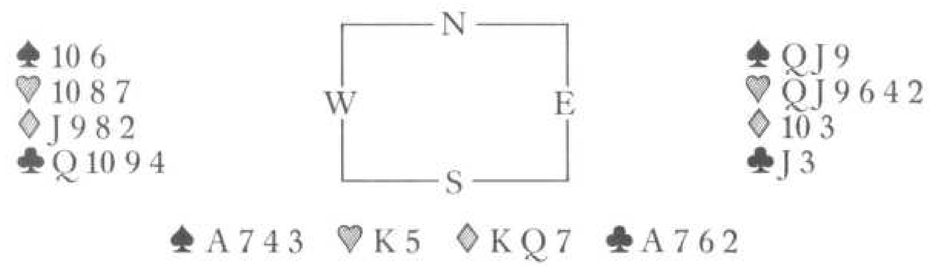
Contract: 4♠ by South
Lead: ♢A

Declarer wins the diamond continuation and plays the ♠K which is won by East's ♠A. East gives his partner a diamond ruff (♠10) and dummy (who cannot discard in a suit without destroying one position or another) *underruffs* (♠3). At trick five West exits with ♣K (his best shot), won by dummy's ♣A. South draws the last trump, cashes the ♣Q and takes the heart finesse, dummy's ♡Q winning the trick. Three more rounds of trumps follow and West is squeezed in clubs and hearts. Declarer's only losers are one diamond, one diamond ruff and the ♠A.

When this hand occurred in real life South did in fact go down in 4♠ as he failed to find the underruffing play. Instead, he discarded a heart from dummy whereupon West exited with a heart. When North mentioned that there was considerable merit in underruffing South was positively incensed. 'In my school,' he said, 'we ruff, we cross-ruff and we overruff, but we certainly do not underruff.' Maybe it is as well that there are other schools around.

91. SETTING UP THE PRESSURE POINTS

N–S game; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♢	1♡	1♠	P
2♠	P	3♣	P
4♠	P	4NT	P
5♡	P	6♠	P
P	P		

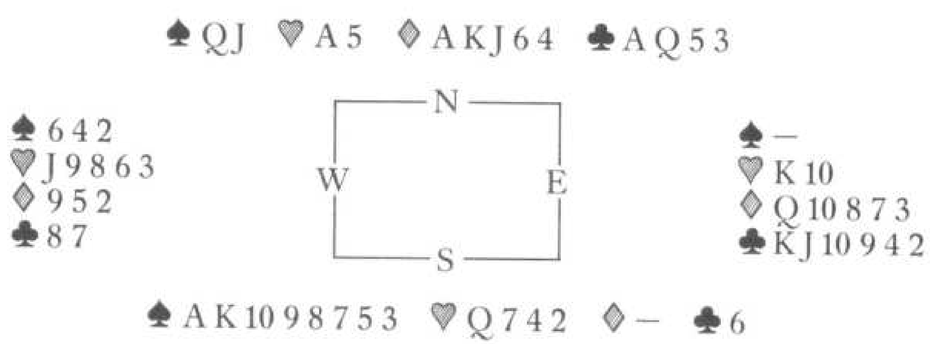
Contract: 6♠ by South
Lead: ♡7

The heart lead is won in either hand and ♠AK cashed. Now the other top heart is cashed followed by two top clubs and two top diamonds, leaving the ♢Q unplayed. Now the time is right to throw East in with a trump. West parted with the ♡10 on the third round of trumps so the count is now complete. East is forced to lead a heart which South ruffs and West is caught in a trump squeeze. Dummy throws the ♣8, and if West throws a club, a club is ruffed in dummy and declarer's hand is high. If West throws a diamond the ♢Q is cashed and dummy is high.

With only ten tricks on top it seems, superficially at least, that South has an almost impossible task. However, the losing trump trick can be turned to advantage by forcing East to concede a ruff and discard. That brings the total of tricks within one of the required target – a sure signal for a squeeze. With the count rectified and West protecting the minors the pressure from East's ruff and discard at trick nine is too much for West to bear.

92. A GUARDIAN ANGEL LISTENS

Love all; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
2NT	P	4♣*	P
4NT†	P	7♠	P
P	P		

Contract: 7♠ by South
Lead: ♣8

* Gerber asking for aces
† Showing three aces

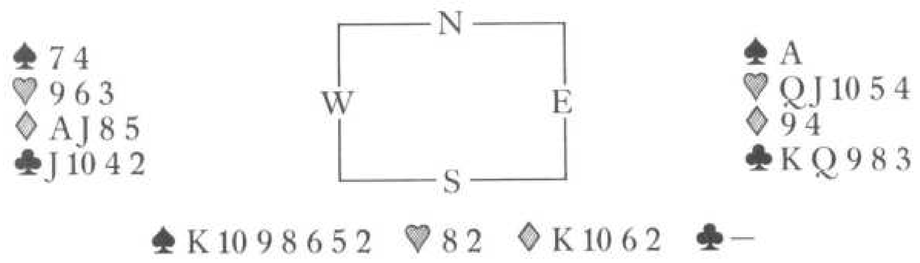
The club lead is won by dummy's ♣A, a club is ruffed and a spade led to dummy's ♠Q. The ♢AK and a diamond ruff are followed by a spade to dummy's ♠J and a second diamond ruff, West discarding a heart. The ♠A is cashed, dummy and East throwing a club. The ♠K is then played and the ♡5 thrown from dummy, but now East is caught in a triple squeeze. He goes for his only chance and discards ♡10. Declarer cashes ♡A and claims his contract.

Before this hand occurred East had been bemoaning his luck. 'No cards all evening,' he wailed.

'Just as well your Guardian Angel listened to you and gave you a few goodies this time,' observed South, none too tactfully, as he caught East's eye. 'With the club finesse marked wrong on the lead, I needed the ♢Q to fall or you to hold the three vital cards. In fact all the goodies.' Perhaps there's a moral somewhere.

93. DON'T CRY FOR ME, ARGENTINA

N–S game; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1NT*	2♡	4♠	P
P	5♣	5♠	P
P	P		

Contract: 5♠ by South
Lead: ♣J

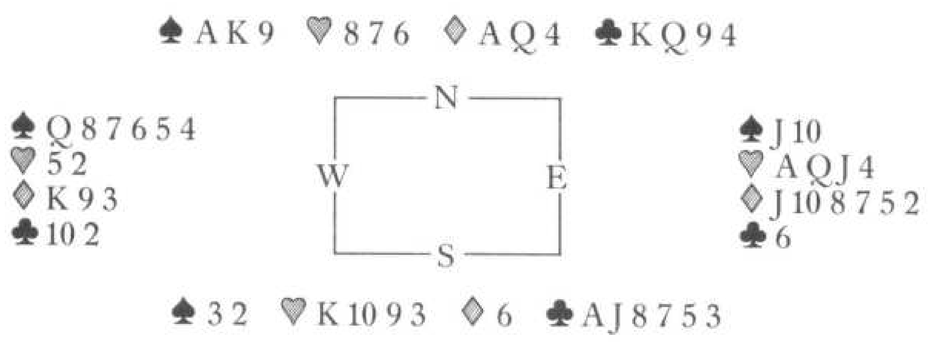
* 16–18 points

South ruffs the opening lead in his hand (he could play the ♣A and ruff a club but he doesn't want to do anything to discourage East from continuing the suit when he is in with the ♠A) and plays a spade to the ♠Q and ♠A. East continues a club which South ruffs. The last trump is drawn and the ♣A and a club ruff are followed by three rounds of hearts, declarer ruffing the third round in hand. The ♢K now effectively end-plays West and declarer is home.

This hand occurred in the 1984 World Team Olympiad held in Seattle, Argentina *v* Iceland. The bidding has been modified slightly to conform with natural methods. At the prevailing vulnerability South, Luis Palazzo for Argentina, was reluctant to sell out over five clubs but he then found himself faced with a daunting task trying to land eleven tricks in his spade contract. Perhaps he was lucky to avoid a diamond switch from East when in with the ♠A but he made the most of his good fortune.

94. NO RAIN IN SPAIN

Game all; dealer North



The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1NT*	P	3♣	P
3♢	P	3♡	P
3♠	P	4♣	P
4♠	P	4NT	P
5♡	P	6♣	P
P	P		

Contract: 6♣ by South
Lead: ♣2

* 16–18 points

Declarer wins the club lead and plays a second club to dummy so as to play a heart towards his ♡K. East wins the third trick with ♡A and exits with ♡Q to South's ♡K. The ♠AK are cashed followed by four more clubs. On the last club West has to retain his ♠Q so he parts with ♢3. The ♠9 is now discarded from dummy and it is East's turn to feel the pressure. He has to keep his ♡J so he also throws a diamond. Now, with the aid of the diamond finesse, dummy is high.

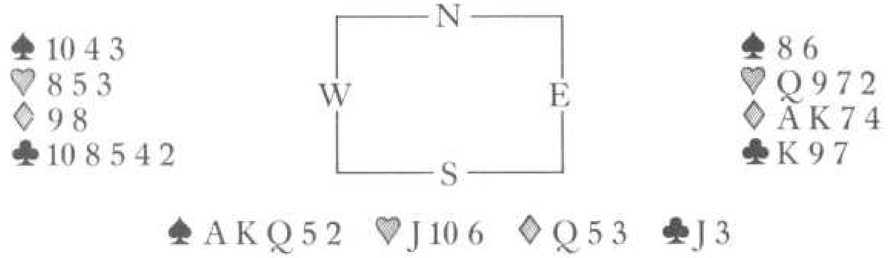
This hand was played in the 1984 World Teams Olympiad in Seattle. Needing points in their match, Spain *v* UAE, Jose DeBlas, South for Spain, embarked on an aggressive sequence. He knew his side could hardly have sufficient high cards for the slam but perhaps the weather would keep fine and he could earn a swing. It was lucky that East did not switch to a diamond at trick four when he was in with the ♡A. That would have severed the communications and rendered the slam impotent. Equally East could have defeated the contract by playing the ♡J or ♡Q when declarer led the ♡6 from dummy.

Notes

The squeeze will not work if South fails to cash the ♠AK.

95. THE CLUE IS IN THE BIDDING

N–S game; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1NT*	P	2♢†	Dbl§
3♡	4♠	P	P
P			

Contract: 4♠ by South
Lead: ♢9

* 12–14 points
† Transfer to 2♡!
§ A good hand with general values

The defence take the first three tricks, West ruffing the third diamond. The club switch is won in dummy with ♣A and the trumps are drawn in two rounds ending on the table. Declarer's losing club is discarded on dummy's fourth diamond. Now a third trump places the lead back in declarer's hand. The ♠Q is led and dummy discards the ♡4 but East is caught in a trump squeeze. If he throws a club dummy is entered with a heart and a club trick is established. If he throws a heart the ♡AK are cashed and declarer's hand is high.

This is a hand from the 1984 World Teams Olympiad held in Seattle, and the star player was Roman Smolski. Despite his Polish sounding name he was playing for GB in their match against India.

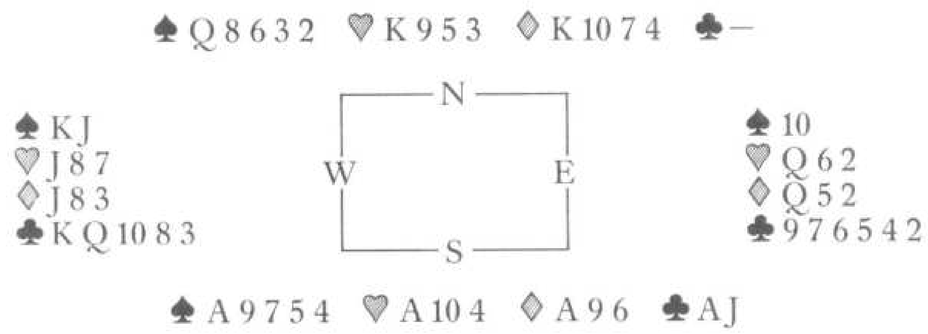
In the open room the bidding was comparatively straightforward. The British East opened 1NT, South overcalled 2♠ and North went direct to 3NT. 3NT is the natural contract and India had no trouble in scoring their ironclad game. In the closed room, however, West decided to 'perform', hence his transfer bid of 2♢ showing a non-existing heart suit. East believed his partner as his jump to 3♡ shows. South's final bid of 4♠ looks mandatory as the auction has gone but it needed all Smolski's skill to land this contract and save the day.

East is clearly marked with the ♡Q (and ♣K) on the opening bid of 1NT, but if West has a five-card heart suit the ♡Q should be falling under the AK. But wait. What about East's jump to 3♡? That bid would never be made

on a doubleton. Reading the cards with great skill, Smolski diagnosed the position correctly and landed his contract with great skill.

96. SPANISH ARTISTRY

Love all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	P	4♠	P
5♣	Dbl	5♢	P
5♡	P	6♠	P
P	P		

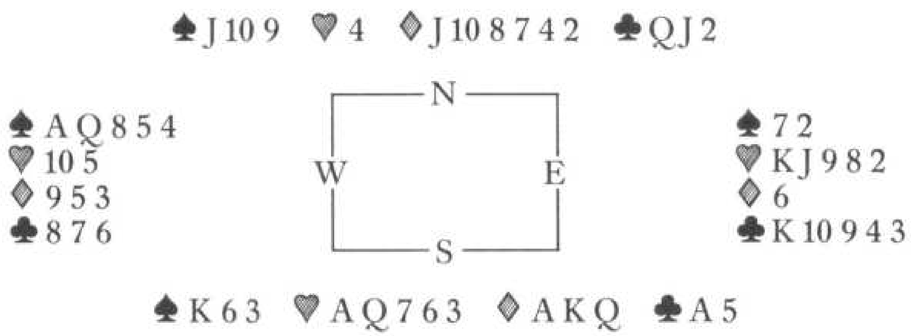
Contract: 6♠ by South
Lead: ♣K

Declarer should ruff the club lead in dummy, cash the ♠A and ruff the ♣A in dummy! He now exits with a spade to West's ♠K. West plays the ♡8, dummy plays low and East's ♡Q is captured with the ♡A. The heart finesse, picking up West's ♡J and the 3–3 break enable declarer to make his contract.

The player who handled this deal with such dazzling brilliance was the Spanish international Rafael Munoz. The bidding was ambitious and the red suits had to behave kindly, but had the real life scene been set in any other way declarer's expertise and fine opportunism would never have been recorded for posterity. That would have been a great loss. West's exit with the ♡8 when thrown in with the ♠K leaves declarer little option but to play correctly from then on – the ♡J would have been better as declarer might read it as a false card from QJx, win with the ♡A in hand and finesse (unsuccessfully) the ♡9.

97. ROAD CLOSED – NO ENTRY

Love all; dealer East



The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
P	2♣	P	2♦
P	2NT	P	3NT
P	P	P	

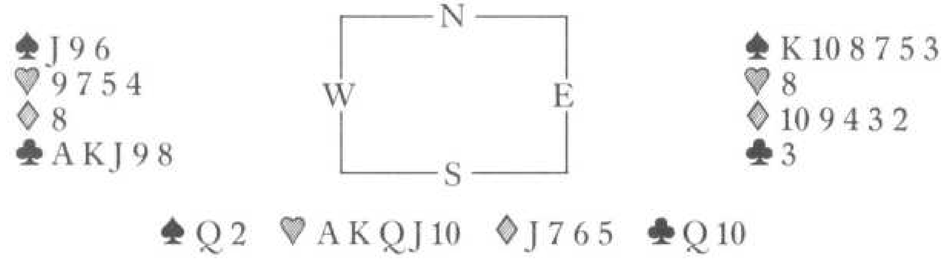
Contract: 3NT by South
Lead: ♠5

The first trick is won with dummy's ♠9. The heart finesse and then three top diamonds are followed by the ♥A. At this point declarer exits with ♠K (a small spade would work as well. This would give West the option of cashing his spades, or winning the ♠Q and then throwing South back on lead with ♠K. If West decides on the latter line declarer exits with a heart and still makes his contract – but this is only because East, and not West, holds the ♣K). West takes his four spade tricks but must then play a club which is all declarer needs.

The star on this hand was Alan Truscott who enjoys the unique distinction of having represented both the USA and GB at top international level. He is also the famed bridge correspondent for the *New York Times*. As declarer on this hand he had one major problem; how to get to dummy and make use of the assets that were waiting for him. Since he could not do the job himself he enlisted the reluctant services of West.

98. CALCULATED ABANDON

E–W game; dealer West



The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	1NT*	P	3♥
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Contract: 4♥ by South
Lead: ♣A

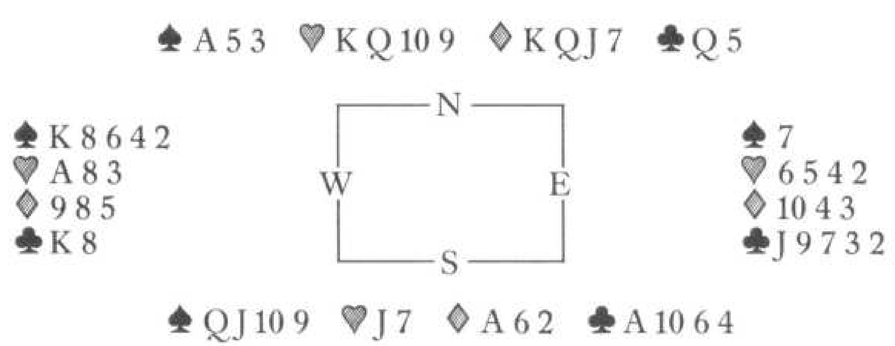
* 12–14 points

West takes two top clubs and continues with a third round, East discarding the five and three of spades and declarer ruffing. Declarer draws all the trumps, discarding ♠A from dummy, and then cashes the three top diamonds. A spade from dummy enables East to win the third trick for his side but declarer takes the balance.

South has ten tricks on top but as the diamond suit is blocked there are problems in cashing. However, remembering that West passed as dealer and therefore East seemed marked with the ♠K, declarer hit on a simple solution. Simple, that is, once the penny had dropped. East was known to have only spades and diamonds left so on the fourth heart he discarded the ♠A with some confidence. Then, after ♦AKQ, the small spade from dummy left East without an effective counter.

99. THE KING IS DEAD LONG LIVE THE KING

N–S game; dealer South



The bidding:

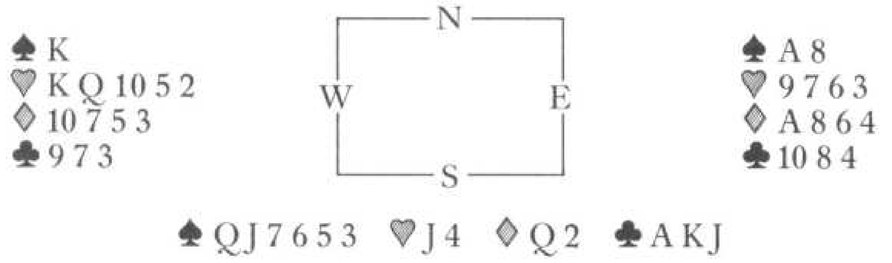
SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♣	1♠	2♢	P
2NT	P	3♠	P
3NT	P	4NT	P
5♡	P	6NT	P
P	P		

Contract: 6NT by South
Lead: ♢9

Dummy wins the first trick with ♢J, and then the ♡K goes to West's ♡A. The diamond continuation is won in the closed hand. The ♠Q and ♠J are allowed to hold (it would be immediately fatal for West to cover). On the second spade East discards a small heart. Dummy's high hearts are now cashed and then two rounds of diamonds, South throwing the ♣10, catches West in a criss-cross squeeze. If he throws a spade, the ♠A is cashed and declarer's hand is high. If he throws a club, the ♣A is cashed and the dummy hand is high. The moral must be that if you bid aggressively you need good fortune and expert card play.

100. HOW THE MIGHTY ARE FALLEN

Game all; dealer South



The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	P	3♠	P
4♠	P	P	P

Contract: 4♠ by South
Lead: ♡K

The first trick is won by the ♡A. Three rounds of clubs follow, ending in dummy. When the club suit divides 3–3. the thirteenth club is played and the ♡J is discarded from hand. East wins this trick with ♠8 (best) but it does not matter how the defence continues. When declarer regains the lead he plays a trump and crashes the ace and king together.

At the table declarer's plan was to play the ♠Q at trick three hoping that there would be a crash of honours. This plan was a little naïve because even if West had held ♠K8 only a novice would accept the bait. West only has to ask himself if it would be reasonable play for declarer to lead the ♠Q from ♠AQ etc. and the correct defence is immediately apparent. With ♠Ax West would be on slightly sounder ground if he considered contributing the ace, but there is no good reason for the rush and the idea should be quickly rejected.

Declarer needs a 3–3 club break but once this has happened his chances are excellent; in the event they are 100% solid.

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